

Beyond Surplus, Beyond Motherhood:

British Migrant Women 1914-1929

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by

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## List of abbreviations

BCL	British Commonwealth League
BWEA	British Women's Emigration Association
EMB	Empire Marketing Board
FANY	First Aid Nursing Yeomanry
IODE	Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire
LLCPS	Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society
OSC	Oversea Settlement Committee
SOSBW	Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
WNC	Workers' National Committee

## Abstract

Beyond motherhood, beyond surplus:  
British migrant women 1914-1929

Rachel Mulhearn

The following study gives attention to the history of women who left the UK to settle overseas between 1914 and 1929, specifically in the British Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It introduces female migration during this period as an aspect of women's history that focuses on occupational diversity, paid and unpaid, within and outside of marriage. It adds to existing studies of overseas settlement during the interwar years while introducing the First World War as a period for which a gendered migration historiography can also be applied. The study considers this chronological span as a continuum of activity, established during the age of the Great Migration of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and discusses patterns common to an extended period of overseas settlement, while also identifying variance. Central to the thesis is the study of occupation amongst British migrant women, a theme used as a foundation to discuss self-determination in the context of two constructs that framed female migration and empire settlement: "surplus" women and the ideal of motherhood. The construct of "surplus" women, on which nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migration schemes were built, is probed, as is the theme of motherhood as an instrument of British empire settlement. These are discussed across the broader contexts of race, gender and class. In the thesis, and using a series of case studies, the ideological framework within which women left Britain to settle overseas is tested through an exploration of migrant women's lives beyond surplus and beyond motherhood.

Applying a range of digital and printed sources, including formal ones such as census returns, passenger lists, official archives and related propaganda ephemera alongside personal documents and museum artefacts, this thesis introduces new ideas about how British women responded to migration opportunities and the domestic environment within which they made the decision to leave the UK. Using personal testimony in the shape of diaries, letters, poetry and material culture, the study challenges the prevailing notions of the profiles within which British migrant women were slotted, depending on their marital status and occupation, and presents a fuller reality of their lives.

### **Introduction: “Not a new stunt. But very old.”<sup>1</sup>**

When Susannah Nicholls wrote to her sister Olive in December 1922 to give her the news that she was applying to relocate, with her family, from Britain to Australia under the Empire Settlement Act, she referred to the initiative as “Not a new stunt. But very old.”<sup>2</sup> Susannah had identified the continuum of a long-established pattern of migration from Britain to the British Dominions across decades and straddling centuries. This study presents a fuller understanding of the lives of women like Susannah Nicholls, and connects the experiences of those women who migrated from Britain between 1914 and 1929 to Canada, Australia and New Zealand by linking themes common to the time period and specific geographies.<sup>3</sup> These destinations offer similar histories of settlement and offer a commonality in patterns of inward migration, especially in terms of their relationship with Britain.<sup>4</sup>

The chapters that follow are arranged by a series of themes, underpinned by the two leading concepts that framed female emigration policy: the “surplus” woman and the ideal of motherhood. Female emigration schemes of the nineteenth century positioned women within this framework, and those of the twentieth century inherited the same approach to overseas settlement, arguably fortified by a resurgence in imperialism after the First World War. While retaining these two notions throughout my study, I deconstruct them by placing individual women centre stage to arrive at a more accurate

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Susannah Nicholls to Olive Rix, 7 December 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this study I focus on England, Scotland and Wales as countries of departure.

<sup>4</sup> M. Langfield, ‘“A Chance to Bloom”: Female Migrationists and Salvationists in Australia and Canada, 1890s to 1939.’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 17 (39) 2002, p.288.

understanding of their diverse experiences as migrants, which were shaped as much by their backgrounds as their encounters with new environments. I introduce the First World War as a phase of migration, and integrate it with outward movement of the 1920s. I discuss in detail some of the women who travelled during the early period of interwar migration in Chapters 4 and 5. Some were wives and mothers, travelling in family units, some widows with children, and others unmarried, travelling alone or in groups. Their marital status influenced how they responded to resettlement, where they settled, and the nature of their lives as migrants, themes constant throughout this study. By doing so I introduce into the historiography a period dominated by global conflict, yet one during which women continued to move overseas, that I extend into the first decade after the First World War. By taking chronologically adjoining yet historically varied periods, my approach serves the purpose of demonstrating the continuity of women's migration activity while also highlighting important differences.

The existing historiography that pays attention to British outward migration is generally segmented into that of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, until the outbreak of war in 1914, and then the interwar years, with particular reference to the early years of the Empire Settlement Act during the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> My study adopts a new chronology, introducing the First World War as a phase of migration that links to the era of empire settlement during the 1920s. By doing so, I situate the years of conflict as an aspect of women's migration history that deserves more attention. It is evident that the First World War interrupted migration activity. Eric Richards, for example, states that

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<sup>5</sup> Existing literature is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

migration from Britain was “effectively blocked”.<sup>6</sup> Yet while numbers of people leaving Britain to settle overseas dropped significantly, my study demonstrates that migration did not cease entirely. Also, it is this very disturbance to migration that makes the period interesting for study, and that - as I will argue - of the estimated 150,000 people who left Britain during the war, a significant proportion were what was classed as unaccompanied women, that is, not travelling with a husband.<sup>7</sup> Concurrent with this regendered migration activity throughout the war were political discussions about postwar resettlement, out of which the Empire Settlement Act evolved, preceded by a scheme to relocate former service personnel and their families to British Dominions.

When, in 1922, the Empire Settlement Act was passed “to make better provision for furthering British settlement in His Majesty’s Oversea Dominions”, a component of post-First World War imperial reconstruction was put in place.<sup>8</sup> The vision behind such legislation was to resurrect the migration phenomenon that had defined the decades before the First World War, not merely in terms of volume, but also the trend of movement towards empire destinations.<sup>9</sup> From the introduction of the Empire Settlement Act, until 1933, out of 1.5 million people who left Britain, approximately 70 per cent settled in empire destinations.<sup>10</sup> The experience of war repositioned how empire was thought about, and “ushered in a new Imperial system”, using resettlement to embed

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<sup>6</sup> E. Richards, *Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 235.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235. Richards estimates that between 1915 and 1918 150,402 people left Britain for non-European countries.

<sup>8</sup> *Empire Settlement Act, 12 & 13 Geo. 5 Chapter 13* (London: H.M.S.O., 1922), p.1.

<sup>9</sup> M. Harper and S. Constantine *Migration and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.9.

<sup>10</sup> G.F. Plant., *Oversea settlement: Migration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions* (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1951), p.91.

common interests along lines of race, culture, identity, trade, economy and defence.<sup>11</sup>

This attempt to bolster empire was therefore characterised by the focus on incentivising individuals to select the “white Dominions” of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, redefined during the nineteenth century through the arrival of British settler societies.<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of the following discussion, the emphasis lies largely with migration to Canada and Australia, and to a lesser extent, New Zealand. That is not to disregard the importance of South Africa in the broader history of white female migration during the period. There was much commonality across empire destinations, not least in their search for a source of domestic labour, as true of South Africa as Canada and Australia.<sup>13</sup> Yet, it was the two latter countries to where most women looked for overseas settlement. Aided through schemes under the Empire Settlement Act, the encouragement on the part of the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women (SOSBW), formerly the British Women’s Emigration Association (BWEA), helped direct the attention of prospective migrant women to these countries. The dominance of white imperial culture there played a significant role, heavily utilised by emigration promoters and pro-imperial government representatives.

The financial incentives introduced under the Empire Settlement Act were not the first attempts to encourage British migrants to empire destinations. Assisted passage schemes to support settlement, and economic exploitation of Australia, had been introduced at different times throughout the

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<sup>11</sup> J. Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics’, in J.M. Brown and W.R. Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of The British Empire: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.66.

<sup>12</sup> Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire?’, pp.68-69.

<sup>13</sup> See J. Bush, ‘The Right Sort of Woman: female emigrators and emigration to the British Empire, 1890-1910’, *Women’s History Review*, 3:3 (1994), pp.385-409.

nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The result was that, between 1920 and 1929, 71% of people migrating from UK ports went to empire destinations.<sup>15</sup>

The figure above marked a gradual upturn, but it is important to note that, while the Empire Settlement Act consolidated this direction of travel, the years 1901-1913 witnessed the most significant increase, to 64%, compared to 28% during the preceding decade.<sup>16</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century the notion of empire was set firmly in the psyche of people, becoming especially potent in the post-1869 period when, as Grant argues, a series of international events crystallised the trenchant perception, at home and abroad, of Britain's imperialism as the great, global civilising force.<sup>17</sup> The Empire Settlement Act was an attempt to demarcate white British movement overseas around empire destinations. With approximately two thirds of people migrating to Australia between 1924 and 1929 arriving from Britain, it was clear that imperial ties played a part.<sup>18</sup>

However, the imperial harmony sought by British imperialists did not necessarily play out in reality. By the early twentieth century, the dominion governments had sufficient autonomy to resist automatic implementation of British government policy.<sup>19</sup> Attitudes to British migration in Canada, Australia and New Zealand varied, and shifted throughout the decade after the First World War. Dominion governments initially reacted against the Empire Settlement Act as a solution to the UK's domestic unemployment problem, but

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<sup>14</sup> For more detailed context about nineteenth century migration initiatives see Harper and Constantine, *Empire and Migration*; A.J. Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1979) and E. Richards, 'Migrations: The Career of British White Australia' in D.M. Schreuder and S. Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.163-185.

<sup>15</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> R.D. Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p.xvi.

<sup>18</sup> M. Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.3.

<sup>19</sup> Darwin, 'A Third British Empire?' p.73.



the British government successfully balanced the notion of subsidised labour in rural areas to meet demand in the respective countries.<sup>20</sup> Many strands of the Empire Settlement Act and the soldier settlement initiative that preceded it were ultimately deemed a failure, for a range of reasons, including the politics of the project, defined as they were by tensions between Britain and the dominion governments.<sup>21</sup>

Despite this, overseas settlement was enthusiastically pursued under schemes rooted in the nineteenth century. The perceived challenge of population imbalance both within Britain and in the leading empire destinations of Canada and Australia, and to a lesser extent South Africa and New Zealand, became clear: more men than women migrated, leading to concerns amongst British establishment bodies about the lack of a civilising presence in the colonies, in the shape of white British women. Interracial relationships between male settlers and indigenous women provided a cause for concern, not least amongst empire promoters, who saw such unions as an obstacle to the natural growth of white settlers to dominate colonised lands, economically, territorially and culturally.<sup>22</sup> The anticipated role of white British women became a dominant characteristic of empire, rendering it, in Hall's words, 'gendered work' that "blood tied white Anglo-Saxons one to another".<sup>23</sup> The concern to protect white dominance, through settlement and population growth, was matched by an increasing preoccupation in Britain around "surplus" women, that is,

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<sup>20</sup> K. Williams, ' "A Way Out of Our Troubles": the Politics of Empire Settlement, 1900-1922' in S. Constantine (ed), *Emigrants and Empire. British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.38.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the factors that limited the success the soldier-settlement scheme are discussed in K. Fedorowich, 'The assisted emigration of British ex-servicemen to the dominions, 1914-1922' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, pp.22-44. Other schemes in Canada targeted at families are included in Schultz, J.A., "Leaven for the lump": Canada and Empire Settlement, 1918-1939' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, pp.150-173.

<sup>22</sup> Harper & Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.215.

<sup>23</sup> C. Hall, 'Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century' in P. Levine, (ed), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.47.

unmarried and unemployed women who were perceived as a burden on society.

Migration activity from Britain during the 1920s was, therefore, dominated by attempts to effect the objectives of the Empire Settlement Act, and which specifically targeted women through the official work of the SOSBW.<sup>24</sup> Created in 1919 from the Joint Council of Women's Emigration Societies, itself an amalgamation, in 1917, of all the respective female emigration societies including the BWEA, the SOSBW adopted a dominant role after the war.<sup>25</sup> Women were an important focus of those policies and initiatives that came to embody the Empire Settlement Act and the resettlement projects that preceded it from 1919 onwards. These were driven by the need to resolve post-First World War unemployment and increase marriage opportunities through migration, fired by a public preoccupation with the surplus woman question.<sup>26</sup> Women's status as migrants had been framed very differently to their male counterparts through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, reflecting their perceived function in society, and yet in reality sometimes took them, practically, outside of societal norms as they interacted with new environments.<sup>27</sup> Yet migration opportunities received a lukewarm response from women and men, even if domestic conditions "seemed ripe".<sup>28</sup>

The above considerations prompt the question why, against popular trend, did some women migrate, whether taking risks travelling by sea during a

<sup>24</sup> For more detail see L. Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s -1930*, (Toronto, Buffalo and London: Toronto University Press, 2007) pp.10-13.

<sup>25</sup> J.P. Smith, 'The Women's Branch of the Commonwealth Relations Office: the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women and the long life of empire migration', *Women's History Review*, 25:4 (2016), pp.520-535.

<sup>26</sup> For detail around how women were positioned within empire settlement policy see J. Gothard ' "The healthy, wholesome British Domestic girl": Single Female Migration and the Empire Settlement Act, 1922 -1930' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*: pp.72-95.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Rutherford's work on British missionary women in nineteenth century Canada. M. Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Richards, *Britannia's Children*, p.234.

global conflict, or during the era of empire settlement afterwards? I address this question through a discussion of intersecting issues that framed the lives of prospective, and actual migrants, and provide a new understanding of the circumstances under which these women left Britain. Migrant women navigated their decisions, at a very personal level, through a landscape of diverging political and economic opinion, packaged in propaganda and promotion that was positioned across their domestic lives. One of the purposes of my study is to understand this landscape, and to what extent these women engaged with it.

When, in the immediate post-war years, the Oversea Settlement Committee (OSC) began to position migration as a solution to addressing female unemployment, it commented that British migrant women could take advantage of the “favourable opportunities of proceeding overseas where the immediate chances of employment and ultimate prospects of happy married life are better than they are here”.<sup>29</sup> I argue that the opening up of professional opportunities for middle-class women, and the growing financial independence of their working-class counterparts, led them to reject the label of surplus. Through the discussion below, I demonstrate that, while nineteenth-century women were trapped within an ideological categorisation which formed a rationale pivotal to female migration, for women of the 1920s an environment emerged that placed this Victorian approach to resettlement in tension with a modernising society. I discuss how, during the post-First World War era, ideas about women, work and domesticity were recalibrated and impacted on female migration. I also argue that, for those women who did migrate during the

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<sup>29</sup> Gothard, ‘The British domestic girl’, p.75.

period, seeking “happy married life” was not necessarily their goal.<sup>30</sup> Women had been shaped by the experience of wartime work and while the Ministry of Labour suggested a return to prewar gendered occupational profiles, some, such as Lady Rhondda, President of the Women’s Industrial League, saw an opportunity to redefine women’s employment opportunities after the war.<sup>31</sup> This domestic environment provides a basis for discussing occupational diversity, and to what extent British migrant women sought work beyond traditional jobs, particularly in the service sector, and whether wartime experience had shifted expectations. That is not to say that women were always welcomed as migrants in recipient countries, especially those who were young, unmarried and working class. This theme is further discussed in Chapter 4. So, during the interwar years, migration remained a route through which women exploited overseas opportunities as a way of fulfilling personal ambition, away from the hostile domestic setting that emerged in Britain, one reactive against women’s new-found diversity of occupation and independence temporarily created through war. While the unpopular domestic service sector remained the main opportunity overseas for working women, the dominions promoted favourable conditions, not just in terms of wages but also in the shape of modern homes that were easier to manage. Freedom from British class hierarchy in the more egalitarian, “newer” countries of the dominions enhanced the attraction of the overseas domestic service sector.<sup>32</sup> However, in Britain, the 1920s also saw the expansion of jobs for working-class women, such as in offices, shops and bars, providing an alternative route to occupational diversity than offered

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<sup>30</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.115.

<sup>31</sup> Gothard, ‘The British domestic girl’, p.77.

<sup>32</sup> Gothard, ‘The British domestic girl’, p.81.

through migration.<sup>33</sup> Those women who migrated during the period were small in numbers, and the scheme was considered, by 1929, unsuccessful.<sup>34</sup> The question for my study, therefore, is to understand under what circumstances a minority of women chose to leave Britain.

Studying women through the perspective of their occupation positions them apart from the rhetoric of the surplus woman that became so dominant in the popular psyche during the 1920s, driven by a paradox of diminished marriage prospects due to male war casualties, and rising criticism of young women who sought alternatives to a married life. Using migration as a viewpoint allows a useful discussion about the occupational choices on offer to women who moved overseas. Occupation, paid and unpaid, for women settling overseas is a theme present, but not dominant, in twentieth-century migration historiography, and needs more emphasis.<sup>35</sup> As a focus for migration history, female working lives offer a pathway to understanding women's decision-making, and also provides rich insight into settlement experiences, not least in the area of unpaid employment in the context of family life.

I argue that, although migrant women were positioned by society within a specific framework, it was not necessarily how they identified themselves. Their stories speak to their creativity, ambition and independent spirit, albeit within the straightjacket of British and imperial society. It would be erroneous to imply that these women all succeeded, or even sought, to relocate their lives outside of imposed societal constructs. Through my study I play out the tension between emigration as an opportunity for women to secure work and become

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<sup>33</sup> Katherine Mullins discusses the beginnings of women's occupational diversity and economic independence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. K. Mullins, *Working Girls: Fiction, Sexuality and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> B.L. Blakeley, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the problems of empire settlement, 1917-1936', *Albion*, 20 (1988), p.436.

<sup>35</sup> See for example Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.215-222 and Gothard, 'The British domestic girl', p.77.

self-supporting, and the ideological sentiment of them fulfilling a role of “womanly duty and service” through empire settlement.<sup>36</sup> I show how women brought their individuality to empire settlement, and how they demonstrated diversity rather than commonality. I build on the idea that women’s identities changed as they became shaped by the cultural and political environments around them.<sup>37</sup> Adela Pankhurst’s interaction with Australia, after her migration in 1914, is an example of how one woman arrived with a specific set of political and ideological views and whose engagement with her new country reshaped her interests and work.<sup>38</sup> A contrasting example is that of Elaine Catley, who moved to Canada in 1920, and whose work as a poet, and her own identity, were directly influenced by her experiences of living in Alberta.<sup>39</sup>

While some pushed against the established order, as illustrated in Chapter 5, many women existed within it, and yet also used prevailing ideologies around gender to reposition themselves. Whether as married or unmarried women seeking futures overseas, a common thread that ran through their lives was the pursuit of occupation, paid and unpaid, and the extent to which migration offered new opportunities or constraints, both inside and outside of marriage. These frameworks, set during the nineteenth century, continued to characterise migration activity during the interwar years, yet I argue that a modernising society in Britain added layers to women’s expectations of, and responses to the Empire Settlement Act, bringing in factors not currently dominant in studies around female migration.

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<sup>36</sup> Bush, ‘The Right Sort of Woman’, p. 386.

<sup>37</sup> A particularly good example of this is Rutherford’s work on missionary women in nineteenth century rural Canada. See Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God*, pp.42-43.

<sup>38</sup> I discuss Adela Pankhurst in more detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>39</sup> I use Elaine Catley’s diary as a source for discussion in Chapter 5.

I have structured the dissertation around five core chapters. Through each, I introduce a perspective of women's migration history for the period in question. My introductory chapter explores themes included in the study, and situates them within existing literature. This includes looking across a range of historiographies that includes the dominant studies of the "Great Migration era" and the more recent British empire literature. An understanding of the intersection between migration and imperialism establishes an important context for subsequent chapters. All these approaches look at gendered perspectives to varying extents, and yet gaps do remain in terms of the coverage of women's migration history, which this study will address. The work on British imperialism also offers a useful setting in which to discuss gender, race and class as well as the relationship between women and empire and how female migration occupied a very specific role within it. The fields of First World War and women's domestic British history have utility in providing context to discussing environments within which women lived and worked, and made the decision to migrate.

Chapter 2 explores the constructs of "surplus" and "motherhood", and, as central themes, it is important to understand how they came to be situated in relation to female migration throughout the nineteenth century and up to 1914. Through the following discussion I demonstrate how much of the language and ideology prevalent during the timeframe of this study had earlier roots. "Surplus" was an established term applied within population studies from the early nineteenth century. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to understand how it evolved to become specifically applied to women, and the ideal of motherhood came to assume an elevated position in the ideology of empire. The two

notions considered in the chapter can be viewed through the perspective of social constructionism, with the especially pertinent core argument that people are placed, by existing cultural frameworks, within pre-set categories.<sup>40</sup>

Applying such an approach to the concepts of surplus and motherhood is useful in understanding how women were positioned within them, and sought personal agency by creating their own realities beyond them. As linguistics is a critical component of forming social constructs, Chapter 2 considers the language of both surplus and motherhood, creating a juxtaposition of the two.<sup>41</sup>

In the chapter I explore the ways in which discourse around 'surplus' and motherhood influenced thinking about female migration during the nineteenth century and how its meanings shifted in a way that became increasingly problematic for women during the interwar years. I discuss how, in reality, the profile of migrant women during the interwar years represented, as did that of preceding generations, a diverse range of individuals, increasingly remote from such an unwelcomed label. This I contrast with the increasingly exalted status of motherhood as it became located as an instrument of imperialism through white female overseas settlement, and also one that assumed enhanced importance amongst women as it became utilised as an argument for gender quality.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I introduce facets of women's migration history using three discrete approaches. In Chapter 3 I discuss how, throughout the First World War, migration activity both continued and became heavily gendered. The value of exploring the wartime period as a way to frame the overseas settlement that followed, is to introduce the idea of continuity of

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<sup>40</sup> V. Burr, *Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2015), p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pp.10-11.



patterns of emigration, while allowing a spotlight to fall on women migrants as a dominant cohort. I argue that, while emigration traffic dropped considerably due to the global conflict, it did not come to a complete stop and, as a result of a ban on the part of several shipping companies preventing men of military age from moving overseas from 1916 onwards, and the wartime policy of conscription, the demographic of migrants changed considerably.

This chapter introduces themes of occupation and unemployment, where I argue that challenges faced by women in the early stages of the war had a direct relationship with their decision to migrate as the impact of the conflict on jobs took hold. Advertising for emigration traffic became targeted at women and children specifically during the war years, as shipping companies tried to hold on to the passenger trade, a theme explored further in Chapter 3. It was during this period that empire settlement was mooted, and it was these official discussions, amongst government ministers, that resulted in the emigration initiatives introduced during the immediate postwar period.<sup>42</sup>

Chapters 4 and 5 look at perspectives of women's migration during the 1920s through the prism of marital status, while continuing the leading theme of occupation, outside of and within marriage. In Chapter 4 I challenge the notion of surplus by using case studies of migrant women to explore the backdrop to their settlement overseas.

I look at themes of personal agency and ambition, particularly around career choice. I explore the occupational activity of unmarried working women, and to what extent overseas settlement was seen as solution to employment challenges within Britain. I argue that working women during the 1920s

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<sup>42</sup> Particularly detailed and useful around development of the Empire Settlement Act are Roe, *Desperate Hopes* and Williams, 'A Way Out of Our Troubles' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*.

engaged with overseas settlement, not as part of an imperial project, but as a way to diversify their opportunities, despite being heavily directed towards the domestic service industry.

While the resettlement schemes were largely targeted at younger unmarried women, in reality many married women with families migrated also. In Chapter 5, I compare individual married migrant women and discuss to what extent they identified within the notion of imperial motherhood. I extend my discussion of career and occupation to include married women, whose contribution to, for example, agricultural activity within their role as family makers largely went undocumented, and remains under-represented in current literature. Class is also a central theme as I explore the range of occupations married middle-class women pursued, and the extent to which new geographical, cultural, political and economic environments influenced them. I argue that migration, for some married women, offered opportunities as well as constraints. Such a focus on middle-class women reflects the available sources, and I acknowledge that a gap remains in terms of adopting a similar approach to the lives of working-class married women who migrated. The approach I apply to these chapters introduces to the existing historiography an additional layer of knowledge that positions individual women at the forefront of analysis through biographical study, with particular attention given to the theme of personal agency.

I use my concluding chapter to consider how histories of British migrant women are supported through the material culture held within museum collections. The use of such sources as an entry point to studying female migration historiography is under-used and yet they reveal unique and

personal insight, adding a richness to research findings as well as introducing a methodology that can be applied more broadly to other subject areas. The aim of the chapter is to interrogate to what extent the history of British migrant women is positioned within the public sphere, through museum collecting and interpretation. I argue that, as a cultural context, women's migration history has been largely overlooked and yet extant artefacts within museums offer the opportunity to redress this through reinterpretation. I access the material through digital platforms and, as part of my discussion, consider how such a medium is particularly valuable in connecting currently disparate artefacts through a new narrative of British migrant women's history using digital curatorship.

## **Chapter 1. Locating British women's migration history: Themes and Literatures**

This chapter introduces themes that traverse historical aspects of British women's migration between the years 1914 and 1929, and positions them within contexts of relevant literatures. The overarching themes of gender, labour and empire are cornerstones of the study. The chapter is presented in interrelated sections that introduce historiographies that provide utility in contextualising women's overseas movement through the First World War and immediately afterwards. Such discussion, with women placed at its heart, knits together intersecting subject matter to offer a panoramic perspective of migration during the First World War and in the subsequent decade. Through these thematic strands, the study contributes to a segment of women's history and enhances knowledge of British migration. The concluding section explains the methodological approaches applied and primary sources used.

### **Framing women's migration history**

British women's emigration history encompasses centuries yet remains unbalanced in available literature. Historiography of the nineteenth century is well represented, the twentieth century less so, and periods of conflict are largely overlooked. This approach, arrived at by compartmentalising events, has led to a periodisation that provides, in Levine's words, 'a useful convenience on the one hand, but a misleading and often rigid problem, on the other'.<sup>1</sup>

While the focus of my study is the period 1914 to 1929, it is necessary to reference its evolution, namely the nineteenth and early twentieth century,

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<sup>1</sup> P. Levine, 'Introduction: Why Gender and Empire' in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, p.4.

where the dominant focus of migration historiography and literature lies. Harper and Constantine calculate that, of 51.7 million people who left Europe as migrants between 1815 and 1930, 18.7 million left from the UK.<sup>2</sup> Baines, Erickson and Thomas present aspects of British nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migration, both economic and demographic, in a body of work produced during the 1970s and 1980s which created a foundation for much subsequent study.<sup>3</sup> These works scoped out broad themes relating to mass European movement while refining the understanding of country-specific experiences, for example, the focus by both Erikson and Thomas on urban outward migration from Britain to the USA. Baines added to these studies in his analysis of regional differences in British emigration, and, in particular, the trends of movement specific to England and Wales respectively. While my study does not explore regionalism, it is an aspect that features throughout the case studies presented.

During much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the prime destination for British migrants was the USA. Given its popularity, the country therefore looms large in seminal migration historiographical studies. Writing in the early 1950s, Berthoff presents a study of British migration and industrial occupation that placed migration within an industrial labour context, looking at occupational segmentation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> While his work focuses on the USA as a destination, and does not specifically discuss gendered differences in relation to migration, it does signpost leading

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<sup>2</sup> However, when considering this figure, trans-migration and the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 need to be taken into account. See Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> D. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy: Emigration and internal migration in England and Wales, 1861-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); C. Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994); B. Thomas, *Migration and economic growth: A study of Great Britain and the Atlantic economy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> R.T. Berthoff, *British Immigrants in Industrial America, 1790-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

issues and themes, not least about occupation, employment and class.<sup>5</sup> These themes are usefully picked up by Magee and Thompson's study on globalisation during the long nineteenth century. Their work effectively captures those changes and shifts that moulded the environment within which people migrated, including, for example, communications and trade unionism. More specific study emerged from this foundational work that introduced a diversity of perspectives of migration historiography, perhaps most notably those of Britain and empire.<sup>6</sup>

The literature of female settlement overwhelmingly focuses on the nineteenth century, reflecting on a period during which significant numbers of women migrated and began to create new environments. Chilton's work builds on previous literature about women's migration, largely to the British dominions. While Chilton does focus on nineteenth-century migration, she also introduces new material about how women lobbied for, and influenced the creation of, career paths for female migrants beyond the expected role of the domestic.<sup>7</sup> Chilton's work complements that of Bush who looks at how female imperialist settlers also push for equality in their new societies. While, again, the focus is on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the themes are pertinent to the interwar period also, and provide valuable discussion.<sup>8</sup>

From the broader literature about nineteenth-century migration, studies evolved that paid specific attention to women and the female emigration schemes. For example, work by Hammerton, Gothard and Harper and Constantine provide useful insights across lines of gender, class and

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<sup>5</sup> G.B. Magee and A.S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> For example, see M. Harper, 'British Migration and the Peopling of the Empire' in A. Porter (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.75-87.

<sup>7</sup> L. Chilton, 'A new class of women for the colonies: the *Imperial Colonist* and the construction of Empire' in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, *The British World. Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> J. Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999).

occupation that also extends the historiography into the interwar years.<sup>9</sup> These approaches open out the more biographical approaches deployed to focus on the personalities behind female emigration, such as work by Diamond on Maria Rye.<sup>10</sup> They also add broader content to the studies of the societies and organisations that drove female emigration, for example, by Blakeley, Kennedy, and more recently, Chilton.<sup>11</sup>

### **Migration as an instrument of empire**

Recent literature pays valuable attention to the relationship between migration and empire and offers a rich range of perspectives, especially through national approaches to the subject, as well as aspects of class and gender, much of which is carried through the *Oxford History of the British Empire* publication and its companion series.<sup>12</sup> The dominant focus, however, remains the nineteenth and early twentieth century, a period during which British imperialism grew as a global force. Migration became embedded in a global expansion in what Robert D Grant has defined as a process “underpinned by doctrines associated with colonialism, and....frequently a tool of imperial conquest”.<sup>13</sup> Murdoch and Richards in their respective works that take in the full breadth of British migration from the seventeenth century onwards, also place their analyses firmly within parameters of colonialism and

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<sup>9</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*; Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*.

Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*; Gothard, 'The British domestic girl'.

<sup>10</sup> M. Diamond, *Emigration and Empire: The Life of Maria S. Rye* (New York: Garland, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Blakeley, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement'; Chilton, *Agents of Empire*; D. Kennedy, 'Empire migration in post-war reconstruction: the role of the Oversea Settlement Committee, 1919-1921', *Albion* 20 (1988), pp.403-19.

<sup>12</sup> S. Constantine, 'Migrants and Settlers' in Brown and Louis, *The Twentieth Century*, pp.163-187; M. Harper, 'Rhetoric and Reality: British Migration to Canada, 1867 – 1967' in P. Buckner (ed), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); pp.160-180; A.J. Hammerton, 'Gender and Migration' in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, pp.156-180; Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*; Harper, 'Peopling of the Empire', pp.75-87; E. Richards, 'Migrations', pp.163-185.

<sup>13</sup> Grant, *Representations*, p. xv.

present this exodus as an embedded systemic function of economic, territorial, cultural and political expansion.<sup>14</sup>

In the same series of empire historiographies, works that focus on national perspectives of Canada and Australia can be found. Within these are particularly relevant contributions by Harper, Perry, Richards and Woollacott that study migration and empire through the prism of gender and race, while accompanying chapters provide broader context, work that supports the focus of this study.<sup>15</sup> I will, for example, in Chapters 5 and 6, explore themes of political and social activism amongst women who moved to Australia and New Zealand, and, linking into aspects of suffrage and feminism, explore to what extent transnational influences framed their work.

It must be remembered that empire was not a consistently popular concept, nor were the ideologies contained within it, an aspect of this period that is discussed by Hyam. He argues that, during the Edwardian era, Britain was far more preoccupied with domestic matters than empire.<sup>16</sup> However, Mackenzie's work illustrates how, during the 1920s, empire was repackaged for popular consumption, channeled in part through the new media of film, orchestrated events such as the Wembley Exhibition of 1924, and the work of the Empire Marketing Board, all designed to convey 'the continuing power and significance of the British Empire, of its economic advantages, and of the opportunities for emigration'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A. Murdoch, *British emigration, 1603-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and Richards, *Britannia's Children*.

<sup>15</sup> Harper, 'Rhetoric and Reality', pp.160-180; A. Woollacott, 'Gender and Sexuality' in D.M. Schreuder and S. Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.312-335.

<sup>16</sup> R. Hyam, 'The British Empire in the Edwardian Era' in Brown and Louis, *The Twentieth Century* p.48.

<sup>17</sup> J.M. Mackenzie, 'The Popular Culture of Empire in Britain' in Brown and Louis, *The Twentieth Century*, p.215. For detail of the Empire Marketing Board and its work see S. Constantine, 'Anglo-Canadian Relations, the Empire Marketing Board and Canadian National Autonomy between the Wars', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21:2 (1993), pp.357-384 and S. Constantine, *Buy & Build: The Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986).



## Utilising First World War historiography

Despite the proliferation of literature that considers migration and empire, much of which also scopes in aspects of gender, there is far less that stretches discussion into the interwar period, and virtually none that mentions First World War activity. Harper and Constantine embed, to some extent, this period in their broad study of empire and migration.<sup>18</sup> Their work presents migration and empire from national perspectives, as well as through intersecting themes, including that of women's migration.

Constantine argues that interwar migration was "part of a story indicative of a continuing, though variable, propensity to emigrate amongst British people".<sup>19</sup> By adapting this approach to consider women's migration activity, and by extending it back through the First World War, I will demonstrate further continuity, while being sensitive to variance. The constant includes demonstrating that many women who travelled during the war, often with children, were following established patterns of following on husbands who had migrated in advance, during peacetime, and that the very early years of conflict impacted very little on the trend. The main variance is the correlation that I explore between increasing unemployment and strife amongst women during the war, many of whom became widows, and movement overseas.<sup>20</sup> That is not to suggest that employment was not a factor in nineteenth-century migration. Rather, the First World War created a unique set of circumstances that gendered migration in a pattern not seen before in that women dominated

<sup>18</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*.

<sup>19</sup> S. Constantine, 'Introduction: Empire migration and imperial harmony' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> For a specific study on nineteenth century female migration and occupation see J. Chimes, ' "Wanted : 1000 spirited young milliners": the fund for promoting female emigration' in B. Harris (ed) *Famine and fashion : needlewomen in the nineteenth century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.229-242.

the migrant traffic and one that is an under-researched area of history, but one deserving of more attention. My study offers additional consideration to women's historiography of the First World War through an approach that explores the relationship between work, unemployment and migration, offering a new perspective. In addition, this approach locates the history of female migration away from empire studies within which it is usually discussed. I demonstrate, through a series of case studies, that many women who migrated during the war did so in parallel to the ascending imperialism that evolved into the Empire Settlement Act, and not necessarily as a component of it.

Much literature about the First World War focuses on the occupational diversity enjoyed by women throughout the conflict, which is pertinent as a theme that can be carried through into the interwar period. For example, both Grogan and Watson comment on how the experience of war changed women, and their personal expectations. Women considered that 'working for a living was no longer the mark of the impoverished; it became a badge of honour' and that an unmarried life became a more accepted option.<sup>21</sup> The obverse of this focus is unemployment, which, I argue, underpinned much of the migration activity that women pursued during the conflict. Clearly First World War historiography owns specialised approaches to the study of its many and varied aspects, and yet it was during the conflict that the notion of empire settlement was forged, and the challenges faced by Britain in its aftermath offered an opportunity for its success.<sup>22</sup> This study, therefore, by aligning the impact of war on women with migration, offers a dimension to First World War history previously overlooked.

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<sup>21</sup> S. Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain. The First World War's Legacy for Britain's Mental Health* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Williams, ' "A Way out of our troubles" ' ; Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen'; Roe, *Desperate Hopes* , pp.9-14.

## Empire Settlement

The reduced focus on the First World War and interwar period is perhaps unsurprising given that, as an economic and social force, post-1918 migration activity was minimal compared to the levels of migration that had preceded it, and that during the conflict it was not in any way a force that shaped global dynamics the way it had during the nineteenth century. However, in the context of the twentieth century, arguably the 1920s were as significant as its first decade, if Constantine's statistics are taken as an indicator.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that, as a period of migration activity, the 1920s is a decade deserving of more attention, as Brian L. Blakeley identified in his work during the 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

My study, particularly through Chapters 4 and 5, contributes to an additional aspect of empire settlement historiography. The political and diplomatic contexts in which the Empire Settlement Act evolved are well discussed by Harper and Constantine and Williams in general terms, and by Roe, Schultz and Constantine with specific reference to Australia, Canada and New Zealand respectively.<sup>25</sup> These works continue to provide the bedrock for subsequent studies by offering a collective analysis of migration and empire for the inter-war period. Williams usefully frames the discussion of politics of empire and migration. He discusses the many factors that led to the Empire Settlement Act marking a new phase in migration patterns from the UK that had been previously sporadic on the part of government agencies<sup>26</sup>. Williams' work on how the experience of the First World War consolidated the position of

<sup>23</sup> Constantine estimates figures for migration 1901-10 and 1920-29 to be similar, at around 1.8 million. Constantine 'Introduction' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> Blakeley, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement', p.422.

<sup>25</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*; Williams, ' "A way out of our troubles" ' ; Roe, *Desperate Hopes* ; Schultz, ' "Leaven for the lump" ' ; S. Constantine, 'Immigration and the making of New Zealand, 1918-1939' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, pp.121-149.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, ' "A way out of our troubles" ', pp.24-27.

the imperialists, and their ultimate success at political level in embedding in government migration policy the ideology of social imperialism, remains a valuable generic study.

As a predecessor of the Empire Settlement Act, a government-assisted migration scheme for the resettlement of former service personnel was introduced in 1919. Fedorowich's work is useful to inform further study, although it focuses on the technicalities of the scheme and lacks analysis of personal experiences, including women's. Fedorowich pursues this narrative in the context of empire settlement.<sup>27</sup> There was a body of thought, however, as Fedorowich also discusses, that preferred to focus on domestic reconstruction, and potential also for a UK-based land resettlement programme that provides context for the anti-migrationist sentiment discussed in Chapter 4.<sup>28</sup>

### **Women in the era of empire settlement**

Early analyses of women and empire settlement include works by individuals directly connected to initiatives of the time, including G F Plant who was Secretary of the Overseas Settlement Committee, and active during the 1920s in promoting migration to the British dominions. Plant's studies on the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women (SOSBW) are an early marker in the historiography of women and empire settlement.<sup>29</sup> More recent work contextualises this contemporary commentary to offer more analysis and critique of the work of these organisations and their antecedents, including studies by Blakeley, Chilton and Kennedy who offer details of their

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<sup>27</sup> Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen'.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.52.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Plant, *Oversea Settlement*.

mechanisms, administration, individuals involved, and the international networks through which they operated.<sup>30</sup>

Bush contextualises migration within the imperial mindset of the twentieth century, discussing issues such as gender, race, class, and nationalism, all of which, she argues, influenced relationship with empire. Within this relationship were those settlers, including notable women, who promoted empire settlement. These women were, Bush argues, generally middle class, whereas most working-class men and women encountered empire through the experience of migration. Bush's work moves us closer to issues that had a direct impact on women, and a more rounded understanding of their lives as settlers.<sup>31</sup> The emergence of a consolidated empire with its feminising discourse of family and motherland set the scene for women's roles. This, Levine notes, did not create an environment for commonality amongst women migrants, rather, the broader issues of class, race and politics that Bush discusses defined their new environments, rather than gender alone.<sup>32</sup> When British women are situated within an imperial context, the range of literature available, such as that referenced above, presents strong and rich discussion within which to frame this study. Some work deals with intersecting themes of gender, race and empire across centuries and while much of the focus lies away from the specific period of my study, themes discussed remain pertinent.<sup>33</sup> Bush's study, in which she discusses the environmental shifts within Britain which shaped the relationship between gender and empire in the interwar period, is particularly helpful in contextualising domestic factors which

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<sup>30</sup> Blakeley, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement'; Chilton, *Agents of Empire*; D. Kennedy, 'Empire migration'.

<sup>31</sup> B. Bush, 'Gender and Empire: The Twentieth Century' in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, pp.77-111.

<sup>32</sup> Levine, 'Why Gender and Empire?', pp.2-3.

<sup>33</sup> A further example is R. O'Hanlon, 'Gender in the British Empire' in Brown and Louis, *The Twentieth Century*, pp. 379-397.

linked in to women's migration.<sup>34</sup> Whether as benign players in the imperial project, or strident empire supporters, women, as migrants to British dominions, operated within this framework.

### **Migrant women and “boundaries of whiteness”**

The world across which British women migrated during the 1920s had been shaped by the imperial pursuits of the previous decades. As Rutherford and Pickles observe, white women “buttressed and brokered European expansion and internal settler colonialism”.<sup>35</sup> The Empire Settlement Act continued to embody this ideal, and women remained positioned within a paradigm of race whose “boundaries of whiteness”, as Devereux defines it, were well established by the interwar years.<sup>36</sup> Arguably these white British migrant women occupied the “social category...inescapably racialized as well as gendered” that Ware describes in her study of women and race.<sup>37</sup>

It is therefore impossible to talk about the migration of British women without discussing the racial dynamics of their role as white settlers. Part of this is related to the role of motherhood, but it was also about white dominance pervading all aspects of the environment in which they found themselves, whether, for example, as teachers or missionaries. Ware argues that British migrant women were a critical apparatus in both the construction and mechanisms of white empire. Much literature focuses on women in colonial environments, such as India, and their interaction with the people of these countries. As a result, most of the literature is inclined towards an understanding of middle-class British women, the wives of governors or

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<sup>34</sup> Bush, ‘The Twentieth Century’, p.91.

<sup>35</sup> J. Sangster, ‘Domesticating Girls: The Sexual Regulation of Aboriginal and Working class girls in Twentieth Century Canada’ in K. Pickles and M. Rutherford, *Contact Zones : Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), p.181.

<sup>36</sup> C. Devereux, *Growing a Race: Nellie McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism* (Montreal and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005) pp.114-5.

<sup>37</sup> V. Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992), p.xii.

military officers, and typically with a slant towards the age of empire that fell between about 1870 and 1914.<sup>38</sup> Burton, Levine and Bush explore the themes of women as “domesticating” forces while also deploying a benevolent and superior patronage to their non-white compatriots, as part of a middle-class world, discerned also through those occupations that women accessed, such as teaching, nursing and also, notably, missionary work.<sup>39</sup>

Rutherfordale in her work on race and gender in the Canadian missionary field demonstrates how women interacted with an environment vastly different to the one they left and, as a result, often reframed the spheres of gender and assumptions of race that they had carried to their new homes, including many who migrated from Britain.<sup>40</sup> Here were instances in which the cultural environments in which the missionaries found themselves had as much influence on them, as they did on the communities they found themselves amongst. These are moments of exchange that challenged the fixity of empire settlement and its associated ideology, presenting a fluid and informative relationship, so effectively demonstrated through Rutherfordale’s focus on individual female missionaries in Canada during the late nineteenth century. Diaspora studies, such as Buelmann’s thoughts about English ethnic associationalism and the role of formal societies and clubs, including during the interwar years, are valuable in understanding how race shaped the identity of resettled communities, especially with reference to my discussion in Chapter

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<sup>38</sup> For example, Levine deals with women and empire with specific reference to India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See P. Levine, ‘Sexuality, Gender and Empire’ in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, pp.134-155.

<sup>39</sup> I am using the term ‘non-white’ as shortcut, while acknowledging the problematic nature of this binary approach to categorising people of many races, and the centrality it offers to those who are white.

<sup>40</sup> Rutherfordale, *Women and the White Man’s God*.

5 about how British migrant women responded to their new environments and to what extent they reconstructed the lives they left behind.<sup>41</sup>

Rutherford and Pickles point out that white women, whether in Britain, Canada, Australia or elsewhere across empire ‘were both powerful and powerless. Their power rested in their whiteness, but they were constrained by patriarchy.’<sup>42</sup> So white British women occupied a range of situations that both aligned them with imperial architects, but also placed them as a social group subject to gendered societal control, inequality and prejudice. Taking this argument further, I explore, in Chapters 4 and 5, those women, specifically English working-class migrants who themselves became subjected to stereotyping within their new society. Sangster’s work on Canadian “delinquent” young women is useful, as English migrant women, especially in urban centres, who fell foul of their whiteness through their failure to comply with the profile of ideal female settler, and yet, as a result, often found more diverse cultural exchange as a result.<sup>43</sup>

Both Rutherford and Gothard also explore instances of when British migrant women’s behaviour failed to comply with the imperial paradigm of white dominance, either through cultural exchange in the remote Canadian north, or through interracial relationships between white British migrant women and non-white men.<sup>44</sup> While both deal with nineteenth-century narratives, they serve as indicators that women did not always conform, and that attitudes

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<sup>41</sup> T. Bueltmann, ‘Anglo-Saxonism and the Racialization of the English Diaspora’ in T. Bueltmann, D.T. Gleeson and D.M. MacRaild, *Locating the English Diaspora, 1500 – 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp.118-134.

<sup>42</sup> Pickles and Rutherford, *Contact Zones*, p.2.

<sup>43</sup> Sangster, ‘Domesticating Girls’ in Pickles and Rutherford, *Contact Zones*.

<sup>44</sup> Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God*.



amongst them were not necessarily fixed, but influenced by their new environments.<sup>45</sup>

## **Empire and globalisation**

The continuity of British migrant women as an imperial labour force throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is usefully discussed in Pamela Sharpe's work on gendered migration.<sup>46</sup> Sharpe offers a cross-section of contributions that explore global examples of women's relationship with work and mobility, and while these do not fit within the study's geographical and historical framework, her approach allows for in-depth consideration of women as migrant workers and offers a valuable contrasting profile of them. A further example of such an approach, particularly pertinent to this work, is Emma Robertson's analysis of female workers who moved from Britain to Tasmania to support the establishment of a chocolate production factory in Hobart during the 1920s. Such work offers insight into British migrant women's roles in globalised labour across the interwar empire, a vastly under-studied field.<sup>47</sup>

SOSBW sent women to countries beyond empire, such as China, Brazil, and the USA.<sup>48</sup> Broader literature needs to be consulted to provide a context of understanding relationships between Britain and non-empire countries beyond Europe. Some of this can be found in studies of economic globalisation, such as Boyce, who writes from an American perspective.<sup>49</sup> While economic studies are preoccupied with the 1930s and the Depression era, the discussion about the preceding decade does at least provide an indication of likely migration

<sup>45</sup> These themes I explore further in Chapters 5 & 6.

<sup>46</sup> P. Sharpe, *Women, Gender and Labour Migration. Historical and global perspectives*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> E. Robertson, ' "Belles from Bristol and Bournville in New Surroundings": female confectionary workers as transnational agents, 1918-1928', *Women's History Review*, 25:4 (2016), pp.563-583.

<sup>48</sup> SOSBW, 1/SOS/11/1, Notebook of Emigrants, 1902-28.

<sup>49</sup> R. Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

activity, if not explicitly stated. The dynamic of migration to non-empire destinations is likely to have been created from business and economics alone, and subsequent family ties. Informal empire potentially presents another interesting study of migration, and it is clear, through examples presented in Chapter 4, that emigration associations utilised contacts to relocate young women in those countries mentioned above. Studies such as those by Knight, Balfour-Paul and Miller provide material as a starting point to interrogate how migration might have fitted.<sup>50</sup>

### **Domestic Britain**

Vicinus's work on the connection between the domestic situation of middle-class women in Britain and migration schemes is valuable to this study.<sup>51</sup> By viewing women through the societal constraints within which they existed, and how these were mitigated, especially amongst single, unmarried women, Vicinus offers a domestic-focused entry point into discussing how migration fitted into their strategies. The attitudes that had shaped women's lives within Victorian society prevailed into the twentieth century and, despite improvements to education and more career opportunities for single women such as nursing and office work, teaching and retail, their role in the economy remained defined by limitations of employment.<sup>52</sup>

Vicinus's work provides context in which to understand women's motivation to emigrate. While the lives of women continued to be defined by the dominant rhetoric of their role as family-makers, there were exceptions amongst women who migrated and challenged the accepted social and

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<sup>50</sup> A. Knight, 'Latin America' in Brown and Louis, *The Twentieth Century*; G. Balfour-Paul, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East'; R. Miller, R. *Britain and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> M. Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago Press, 1985).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.28-30.

economic order in which they were expected to exist. Vicinus introduces Mary Taylor who emigrated to New Zealand in the nineteenth century and managed a shop with her brother.<sup>53</sup> To what extent such a rare example of entrepreneurship amongst women continued during the interwar years is little explored in current literature.

Melman focuses on the social environment that women encountered during the 1920s, with specific reference to those who were not enfranchised through the 1918 Representation of the People Act, the so-called “flappers”. While not directly about empire or migration, Melman’s discussions about the representation of young women in the press relate to the concept of the ‘superfluous woman’. Re-positioning this concept, Melman argues, helped to reignite the debate around the value of women’s migration to the British dominions.<sup>54</sup> Melman discusses how these women were portrayed, at length, in pro-imperialist press, helping to fuel the building argument for empire settlement. Pages were filled with the apparent problem of “A Million Women Too Many” but also the consequences of these women remaining unmarried, seeking employment and thus pushing male unemployment up and driving men to migrate.<sup>55</sup> The literature by Vicinus and Melman forms a range of work that, while respectively specific to groups of unmarried women, and in Vicinus’s case, middle-class, offers different insights into domestic Britain relevant to this study.

Connecting migration history to British social history is useful, as during the First World War and the interwar years there were factors that linked overseas movement to the domestic situation. Constantine, for example,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.26.

<sup>54</sup> B. Melman, *Women and the popular imagination in the Twenties* (Basingstoke and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), pp.136-137.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.18.

discusses unemployment and social unrest that throws light on interwar issues such as health, housing, education and household economics.<sup>56</sup> Constantine argues that, alongside the New Liberalism of the interwar years that began to confront these issues on a domestic and political level, ran the imperialist agenda to which migration policy became intrinsically linked. So, imperial initiatives became embedded into domestic policy, and migration was a leading characteristic of these policies. It was a sharp rise in unemployment in the UK that helped consolidate migration to empire destinations as government policy in 1922. Williams' discussion about domestic factors that influenced the Empire Settlement Act also includes the alarming rise of unemployment, and potential for associated class conflict.<sup>57</sup>

Fedorowich places his discussion in his study of the emigration of ex-servicemen after the end of the war, whilst also acknowledging that the real domestic problems that preoccupied former service personnel were caused by unemployment, pension arrangements and housing.<sup>58</sup> Fedorowich argues that the resettlement of ex-servicemen and women was not driven by the imperialist movement, although it was clearly linked. It was perceived more, on the part of imperialists, as a gesture of opportunity towards those who served during the war and had little to do with imperial economic development.<sup>59</sup>

### **Challenging “surplus” and the ideal of motherhood**

I have referenced in the sections above the increasing centrality of migrant women in imperial expansion across various roles but notably their anticipated function as wives and mothers. In the next chapter, I discuss

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<sup>56</sup> S. Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain between the Wars* (Harlow: Longman Group Ltd., 1980).

<sup>57</sup> Williams, 'A way out of our troubles'

<sup>58</sup> Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen'

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

gendered facets of Victorian society, namely the concept of the surplus woman and its relationship with the role of motherhood, how they intersect with migration history, and how they prevailed through the war and into the interwar period of empire settlement. This approach takes a cue from Holden's work, in which she creates a dialogue between singleness and marriage.<sup>60</sup> In her work, although her commentary on surplus women in the post-First World War era is brief, Holden's approach offers a useful model through which to approach the concepts of surplus and motherhood that became so significant to the rationale behind women's migration and imperial expansion. While these do not constitute the "flipsides" of status that Holden presents in her study, the idea of a dialogue between the two is interesting in offering a way to navigate through two shifting aspects of women's societal status that were embedded in thinking behind settlement, albeit in different ways at different times.<sup>61</sup>

Taylor Allen argues that, while feminism as a movement harnessed the exalted role of motherhood, at the same time women were reduced to instruments of policy.<sup>62</sup> This might readily include that of empire settlement, within which women were centrally situated, arguably at a point at which their surplus status, due to interwar unemployment, became aligned with a clear anticipation on the part of imperialists, of their role in white population growth across British-controlled territories.

Such attitudes were embodied in the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, and transposed onto the societal expectations of prospective female migrants. It is not surprising, therefore, that, despite the increased diversity of opportunity

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<sup>60</sup> K. Holden, *The shadow of marriage: singleness in England, 1914-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> See chapter 3 'Between surplus and motherhood'.

<sup>62</sup> A. Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890-1970: the maternal dilemma* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.13.

for women during the First World War, and, in theory, through the Sex Disqualification (Removals) Act, female migrants were largely channelled down a narrow route of choice. This applied to their jobs, where they lived, and even who they married. Once settled in the empire destination of their choice, there was no bar to interracial marriages. However, as Bush, Levine and Chilton discuss, the society into which women arrived, as much as the one from which they left, made life very difficult for those women who chose not to comply with their anticipated role. This, after all, was one of the very reasons why imperialists so actively encouraged women to migrate during the nineteenth century: as potential brides to white male settlers. Chilton takes the argument further, interpreting women's role in empire settlement as that of creator of the 'motherland'.<sup>63</sup> Rather than see challenges to attitudes towards interracial marriages, Levine argues that this period witnessed an increase of intolerance that took the form, during the 1920s, of legislation, in parts of the empire, to discourage anything but all-white liaisons.<sup>64</sup> For women who migrated, when it came to marriage, non-compliance with the imperialist ideal was difficult.

### **Domestic feminism, modernity and empire settlement**

One of the questions for women in Britain was in what ways empire settlement might improve their lot, whether domestically or career-wise. Midgely has demonstrated that women's colonial interaction during the nineteenth century, notably their role in transferring British values and culture to their new environments, was partly born out of a recognition that empire offered something that domestic Britain failed to do and which "grew out of a feminist interest in exploiting the opportunities opening up to educated English

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<sup>63</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, Chapter 4.

<sup>64</sup> Levine, 'Sexuality', p.140.

women in Britain's colonies of white settlement".<sup>65</sup> As with many of the studies on British female migration, the work on gender, feminism and empire is centred on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, Midgley's argument that migration might be as much an instrument of feminism as of empire, opens up possibilities for discussion about the wartime and interwar years, and potentially across social classes. Certainly Bush argues that those who established those societies that promoted female migration during the nineteenth century "reshaped the gendered contours of imperialist ideology", suggesting a shift in power and influence amongst women in a way that situated overseas settlement within a feminist sphere.<sup>66</sup>

The question for the period of wartime, and for the 1920s, was whether migration continued to offer something for women that remained unattainable within Britain. Domestically, this was an era of improvement for women. With post-First World War reconstruction came falling birth rates, increasing educational aspirations, and in working-class families, improved housing, paid vacations, and a rising standard of living.<sup>67</sup> In the immediate aftermath of war, women also sought to consolidate freedoms achieved during the conflict about relaxed dress codes, social behaviour and recreational activities.<sup>68</sup>

The feminist movement concerned itself with the ongoing improvement of women's lives, especially working-class women, addressing issues such as maternity welfare, birth control, and widows' pensions.<sup>69</sup> Yet, many young women also remained disenfranchised, something countries such as Australia and New Zealand offered, and a lingering but central issue for working-class

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<sup>65</sup> C. Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p.124

<sup>66</sup> Bush, 'The Right Sort of Woman', p. 386.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.188.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.

<sup>69</sup> J. Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-28* (Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1989).

women was that of domestic service, and one intrinsically linked with empire settlement.<sup>70</sup> Murdoch, looking at the nineteenth century, introduces the theme of women's suffrage as a tool to attract 'the right sort of woman', particularly critical for Australia in its attempts to slough off associations with convict settlement.<sup>71</sup> This relationship between enfranchisement and women's migration is underplayed, yet is an aspect that takes on new meanings for British women post 1918, and which potentially places resettlement outside of the paradigm of empire historiography.<sup>72</sup>

One of the purposes of my study is to understand the multitude of opinions and voices towards female migration, and to understand the landscape within which women made their decisions. This is complex, and does not fall neatly along political or feminist lines, with very little literature that probes the domestic context. To provide a basis for such a discussion it is necessary to look beyond migration historiographies and towards women's studies because female overseas settlement is not generally placed within a narrative of British domestic history.

To add context to this study, the literature that focuses on women's experiences both during and immediately after the First World War has proved critical, a field that offers themes of unemployment, domesticity, occupation and class.<sup>73</sup> Not only does the work offer insight into the dynamics of women's experience at war, in turn shaping expectations amongst younger women especially, but helps an understanding of how the domestic arena influenced

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<sup>70</sup> The publication *The Labour Woman* carried much coverage around the domestic service issue, and is considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>71</sup> Murdoch, *British emigration*, p.79

<sup>72</sup> This is an aspect I explore in Chapter 6 when discussing the migration of young, working women, excluded from the Representation of the People Act of 1918.

<sup>73</sup> Particularly useful for framing this discussion are D. Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1919-1939* (London: Pandora Press, 1989); A. Bingham, 'An Era of Domesticity? Histories of Women and Gender in Interwar Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 1:2 (2004), pp. 225-233; J. Giles, 'Playing Hard to Get': working-class women, sexuality and respectability in Britain, 1918-40', *Women's History Review*, 1:2 (1992), pp.239-255.



decisions to migrate, on which my thesis builds. This included single women, cast as “surplus” and working women, especially those who were married, and who received vicious criticism during demobilisation when men returning from war were seeking employment, although the rate of British married women who did work was relatively low.<sup>74</sup> I will discuss, in Chapter 5, to what extent migration offered an opportunity for married women to access occupational opportunities that domestic Britain failed to provide. I also discuss to what extent social class played a part, noting that this for many married working-class women, occupation outside of the home remained a “necessary evil”.<sup>75</sup> For some women, whose personal agency was limited, overseas settlement took them down a route of diverse occupation driven by economic need, particular to migrant women, and a theme pursued in Chapter 5.

Another domestic perspective through which to consider the engagement of women with empire settlement is the collective national response to the traumatic experience of the First World War. However, some of their arguments raise more questions than they answer in terms of the lukewarm response to female migration. Grogan suggests that women, in the aftermath of a war during which they played a central - and lauded - role, were left feeling “surplus to the requirements of a male-dominated society” while the “marriage market and the job market were equally out of reach”, all compounded by the “despair of loss”.<sup>76</sup> Kingsley Kent argues that symptomatic of collective national trauma was a tendency to apportion blame towards different groups, as a target for misunderstood anxieties. This confused rationale included women who had seemingly “reveled in the freedoms and

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<sup>74</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.141.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.141.

<sup>76</sup> Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, p.79.

opportunities afforded them at the expense of front soldiers, and then refused to give up their jobs to returning soldiers”.<sup>77</sup> The domestic arena within which personal decisions about interwar migration were formed therefore represented a multifaceted range of perspectives and views. All this, Dauntton and Reiger argue, played out in a framework of British modernity that deployed a “positive perception of imperialism” shared by “conservative imperialists, feminists and socialists alike”.<sup>78</sup>

Women’s migration in the context of internationalism is less discussed, and yet some of the case studies discussed in Chapter 5 illustrate the transnational context in which some migrant women operated. This is true when looking at the retention of family connections and is also evident through the work of those who engaged in promoting women’s rights.<sup>79</sup> Such activity involved mostly middle-class women who had the independence and financial resource to travel internationally. Whether there was a relationship between female migration and the women’s international movement during the period is worth further consideration. Woollacott in her work on women and internationalism focuses on the British dominions. However, as Woollacott concludes, amongst many members of Australia’s women’s movement, the pro-imperial sentiment dominated and a strong imperial identity could be seen in the international women’s associations that were established, framed around the commonality of empire.<sup>80</sup> However, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, migrant women operated within a framework of international women’s rights,

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<sup>77</sup> Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks*, p. 33.

<sup>78</sup> Dauntton & Reiger *Meanings of Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), pp.12-13.

<sup>79</sup> I use British migrant to New Zealand, Margaret Macdonald, as an example of this in Chapter 5.

<sup>80</sup> A. Woollacott, ‘Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women’s Internationalist Activism in the 1920s-30s’, *Gender and History* 10:3 (1998) pp.425-449.

and this informed their local work, illustrated through the example of those in New Zealand, discussed in Chapter 5.

### **Methods and sources**

One of the leading themes of this study is the extent of personal agency exercised by migrant women, and the presence of resistance to imposed frameworks. There is tension between these women as white, advantaged subjects of the British empire, exploiting opportunities for global mobility, and as individuals positioned within restrictive gendered frameworks. These are themes present in literature of empire and gender and in some migration historiographies, which offer a useful steer in terms of approaches and methodology. To offer further value to the study of women's migration from Britain, I have adopted an approach that places women's individual lives at the forefront, and takes a hybrid form, using both official and personal documents to build a collective picture of their lives, while being cognisant of both commonality and differences.

Drawing on the "history from below" approach to exploring global mobility, as discussed by Anderson, is therefore useful.<sup>81</sup> Anderson's work is concerned with a spectrum of forced and restricted movement, and the emergence of modes of resistance in parallel with the imposition of colonial systems and structures.<sup>82</sup> British migrant women sat within these structures, as times actively complicit, at times operating beyond them. Most women existed within them, without challenging them. This is a theme that straddles Chapters 4 and 5, as I explore how women engaged with empire settlement.

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<sup>81</sup> C. Anderson 'Mobilities' in A. Burton and T. Ballantyne, *World Histories From Below: Disruption and Dissent, 1750 To The Present* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, 'Mobilities' in Burton and Ballantyne, *World Histories*, pp.169-70.

I use a range of sources, quasi-official material including the archives of the Society of Overseas Settlement for British Women (SOSBW) and its antecedents, and official records of state governments of Australia and provincial governments of Canada. The former archive has been used effectively by Monks, and more recently, Hammerton, Chilton and Harper and Constantine. However, to supplement existing application of these sources, I have selected material from it that specifically covers the First World War, and which includes personal data which provides insights into individual lives. Usefully, the minutes of the meetings of SOSBW includes women's names, names of ships and dates of sailings, offering a solid entry point into a biographical approach. Cross-referencing the above data with the Board of Trade outgoing passenger lists for British passenger ships allows the above data to be placed in yet another context. The use of this material also opens up information about women who chose to travel independently, beyond the control of emigration organisations, but which, however, can be more difficult to locate.

The above are known sources, used in a variety of ways in existing literature. In order to excavate material that offers new insights, while also supporting the approach of positioning women as individuals centrally, I used, as a starting point, the online Migrations to New Worlds project which provided a direct entry point to sources relevant to the subject matter of this study, with thematic strands that utilise a broad range of sources, including personal data such as letters and journals, as well as visual propaganda and promotional material.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Migration to New Worlds, © Adam Matthew 2017. <http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk.liverpool.idm.oclc.org>. [Accessed 11/05/2017].

The digitisation of regional newspapers adds a significant layer of accessibility to what Berridge, in a pre-digital age, identified as a source of “complex and miscellaneous character”.<sup>84</sup> The newspaper content itself remains disparate in its arrangement, but digitisation allows for accessible study, using consistent search terms across geographies and time periods, and providing invaluable insight into what directions the discourse took. A challenge remains in analysing this content across a timespan within which the concept explored is constantly reinterpreted and repositioned. However, it is within such systematic qualitative study across decades that the understanding of the surplus woman construct is to be found.

A number of factors that influence the outcome of my approach require noting. While the digitised content is not comprehensive, as many newspapers remain undigitised, the sample that is delivered strong geographical representation. Such primary material needs to be treated with caution if they are to be used as a collective source, especially if content is analysed comparatively. The content is dynamic, as rapid introduction of new titles coincided with nineteenth-century urbanisation, while others fell out of print, giving a potentially uneven and shifting geographical representation, especially when interrogating both rural and city-centred publications over a period of time.<sup>85</sup> However, the marked trend was one of disproportionate growth of regional newspapers compared to London, during the second half of the nineteenth century, lending value to these as a source in this study for the

<sup>84</sup> V. Berridge, ‘Content analysis and Historical Research on Newspapers’ in M. Harris and A. Lee (eds), *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (New Jersey, London and Ontario: Associated University Presses, 1986), p.201.

<sup>85</sup> For example, the search for 1830-1839 includes 170 newspapers, representing geographical coverage including Scotland, Wales and England. The latter content includes from English counties such as Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Sussex, Suffolk and Yorkshire. This ensures results include a representation from agricultural areas as well as emerging urban centres, such as Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds <[http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1830-01-01&date\\_offsetdate=1839-12-31](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1830-01-01&date_offsetdate=1839-12-31)>. The search for 1920-29 encompassed 136 digitized titles. <[http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1920-01-01&date\\_offsetdate=1929-12-31](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1920-01-01&date_offsetdate=1929-12-31)> [accessed 18/05/2017]

period.<sup>86</sup> The selection of regional newspapers rather than journals targeted at women, for instance, is based on the length of time assessed and the value of exploring content of concurrent with broadening readership, both of gender and class.

A brief note on newspaper politics and readership is also useful to provide context to this discussion, supplementing the section about these sources in the preceding chapter. The democratisation and expansion of newspapers and journals, occurring as the nineteenth century matured, brought to mass readership those issues previously confined to pages of specialised publications with limited audiences.<sup>87</sup> Williams, in his study of the development of the British press, charts the increase of readers, largely achieved through the introduction of daily newspapers, not least defined by the introduction of the *Daily Mail* in 1896. As the century progressed, therefore, the debate about surplus women was reaching a more diverse audience, although still one dominated by male readers.<sup>88</sup> That is not to say women did not constitute a meaningful readership. Concurrent with this proliferation of newspaper titles at the end of the nineteenth century were journals targeted at women, within which issues relating to them were discussed. Richardson, in her study on the influence of eugenics, argues that these magazines and journals also offered a natural home for debate about health, which “formed a complex nexus of emancipatory and conservative agendas”.<sup>89</sup>

By the interwar period, newspapers occupied a space of gendered discourse, compounded by the application of nuanced language that reinforced

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<sup>86</sup> K. Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) p.116

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100-129.

<sup>89</sup> A. Richardson, ‘Eugenics and Freedom at the *Fin de Siècle*’, in L. Henson *et al* (eds), *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.276.

what Bingham refers to as the “persistence of traditional values and language”.<sup>90</sup> This was tempered, to some extent, by outlets such as the *Daily Herald*, a vehicle, in part, for feminist views. However, the impact of the popular “new press” of the twentieth century such as the *Daily Mail*, had, during the 1920s, carried an anxious preoccupation with the population imbalance that served to reconstruct the “surplus” or “superfluous” woman concept.

While sources such as the publication *Imperial Colonist* are well-used in existing literature and contain much material that sheds lights onto the experiences of migrant women, it was also a propagandist tool of the BWEA. I reference the centrality of this magazine as such in Chapter 2, but chose not to use it as a primary source, allowing instead space for personal histories, applying a biographical approach to build an understanding of women’s migration for the period in question. Much of the literature referenced for the interwar period interrogates the personal experience. Constantine’s most recent work places women’s letters at the centre of his study.<sup>91</sup> Harper, as well as her broader work around migration and empire, looks at the gap between government promotion of migration schemes and the reality confronted by migrants, with specific reference to Canada.<sup>92</sup> Richards provides insights into the experience of migrant communities in Australia using a similar approach.<sup>93</sup>

For my study I use a range of personal testimony, including letters, diaries and poetry of migrant women to Canada and Australia.<sup>94</sup> I also use the

<sup>90</sup> A. Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p.192.

<sup>91</sup> S. Constantine, ‘Dear Grace...Love Maidie: Interpreting a migrant’s letters from Australia, 1926-67’ in K. Fedorowich and A.S. Thompson (eds.), *Empire, migration and identity in the British world* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp.192-213.

<sup>92</sup> Harper, ‘Rhetoric and Reality’.

<sup>93</sup> E. Richards, *Destination Australia: migration to Australia since 1901* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008).

<sup>94</sup> E.M. Catley, *Canada Calling* (Calgary: published by the author, August 1938) and Nicholls, SLV, MS12127.

memoirs of a child migrant, written as an adult and including observations of his mother's experience as a settler in Canada, and the published journal of a couple who moved to New Zealand immediately after the First World War.<sup>95</sup> These present a range of experiences that usefully provide comparative discussions about the nature of female migration during the 1920s. Accessing personal narratives relating to women's migration yields some of the richest data by which to understand their histories and places the individual at the centre of migration studies, viewing the process as a human experience. This approach also allows for varying perspectives of migration history to be better understood, such as social, economic, political, cultural, ideological and institutional aspects, for example through the use of records of juvenile migrants.<sup>96</sup> For example, Catley's poetry celebrating Canada provides a stark comparison with the records of juvenile migrant "M".<sup>97</sup> Catley enjoyed a relatively comfortable middle-class existence in Calgary, Alberta, her social connections affording her the agency to publish her own poetry, which provided her with a voice and a platform for her views and experiences. In contrast, we can access the life of M only through the records of those in organisations that controlled her life as a migrant. Her own voice is denied and any agency she sought was quickly removed, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The use of these personal letters and diary as historical sources needs to be approached with sensitivity and consideration. While now in the public domain, all having been donated to museums by descendants of the writers, they were not intended, nor created for this use, yet they provide one of the

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<sup>95</sup> Clark Family collection, DX/1415, Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool); J. Clark, *To Canada and Back*, Unpublished memoir n.d., Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool); S. and M. Shaw, 'Where do all the flies go...?' *The Journal of Isabel and Samuel Haigh as they emigrated to New Zealand in 1920* (n.d.).

<sup>96</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Central Library

<sup>97</sup> "M" is a pseudonym, anonymised in compliance with use of the Nugent Care Archive, Liverpool Record Office.



richest types of source when investigating and interpreting lives.<sup>98</sup> While a decision has been made, on the part of families, to allow access to such material, Halldórsdóttir makes the point that private letters should be treated “with care and do justice to the people that once were alive and left these personal sources for posterity”.<sup>99</sup> I take this into account when using these sources in Chapter 5, especially those of Susannah Nicholls, whose letters to her sister in England are packed with personal detail that lays bare her homesickness and acute feeling of separation from her family, as well as the hardships of migrant life in rural Australia in the 1920s.

Susannah Nicholls’ letters, in particular, resonate with themes covered by Elliot, Gerber and Sinke in their analysis of historic migrant correspondence.<sup>100</sup> These themes include the challenges of writings for which only one correspondent is extant, as well as implied meanings especially between close friends and family members.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, as neither private letters nor diaries are intended for use as an historical source, it is therefore valid to raise questions of authenticity and historical accuracy.<sup>102</sup> Despite such query, however, what remains in the letters of Susannah Nicholls to her family in England is data laden with rich and valuable detail. In Chapter 7 I also extend this context for Nicholls by building a more extended biography in order to create an understanding of the cross-generational relationships amongst female family members that may have influenced her career as a teacher. Although ultimately complying with her husband’s ambitions to migrate, a

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<sup>98</sup> This approach has been discussed in E.H. Halldórsdóttir ‘Fragments of Lives – The Use of Private Letters in Historical Research’, *Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies* 15:1 (2007), pp.35-49.

<sup>99</sup> Halldórsdóttir, ‘Fragments of Lives’, p.35.

<sup>100</sup> B.S. Elliot, D.A. Gerber and S.M. Sinke, *Letters Across Borders. The epistolary practices of international migrants* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.141-157.

<sup>101</sup> D. Gerber, ‘Epistolary Masquerades: Acts of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters’ in Elliot, Gerber and Sinke, *Letters Across Borders*, pp.141-157 and W. Helbich and W.D. Kamphoefner, ‘How Representative are Emigrant Letters? An Exploration of the German case’ in Elliot, Gerber and Sinke, *Letters Across Borders*, pp.29-55.

<sup>102</sup> Halldórsdóttir, ‘Fragments of Lives’, pp.38-39.

tension between personal agency and marital duty was revealed, as discussed in Chapter 5.

I use the diary of Elaine Catley in Chapter 5 to anchor her experience as an interwar migrant to Canada. However, it is her published poetry that provides a deeper insight into her relationship, both with her adopted country, and with motherhood. To supplement the Canadian material, I also use published literature from Britain and Australia from the interwar years, and earlier, as a source of commentary on themes central to this study. Barber has demonstrated the utility of such an approach in her work about migration and mental health.<sup>103</sup> While Barber's specific focus is on mental breakdown, I apply literary content to themes such as domesticity, personal agency and transnationalism. My use of female writers is also a specific acknowledgement of the use of literature to create a medium through which women's voices might be heard. For example, I explore the work of the Sydney-based *Bulletin* writers of the 1890s and the novels of May Sinclair and Winifred Holtby, the latter offering insights into both personal issues, such as marriage and isolation, spinsterhood and widowhood in the context of empire societies.

I have exploited digital sources for much of my study, including newspaper content, Board of Trade passenger lists, British and US census returns, birth, marriage and death records, and First World War military records. The value of using digitised passenger lists in approaches to migration history for the interwar period has been demonstrated by Harper and Evans who applied a similar methodology to a demographic study of migrants

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<sup>103</sup> M. Barber, "Stories of Immigrant Isolation and Despair: Canadian Novels and Memoirs Since the 1850s" in M. Harper (Ed.) *Migration and Mental Health. Past and Present*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp.129-148.

leaving Scotland during one specific year.<sup>104</sup> The existence of sites such as *FindmyPast* and *Ancestry.com* offer useful portals, both to access this data and to execute searches across multiple sources and across geographies, using, for example, an individual's name or the name of a ship. Additionally, *FindMyPast* provides access to digitised newspapers, allowing for a range of searches against different criteria, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Digital access is invaluable in constructing biographical approaches to migration history, recognised by scholars such as Harman in her study of the practical value of using online sources to develop a digital teaching module "Convicts Australia" for accessing Australian family history that intersects with migration.<sup>105</sup>

In Chapter 6 I introduce a digital humanities approach, exploring how information can be accessed, organised, curated and disseminated across disciplines including public history, museology and material culture. For this purpose I use the definition for digital humanities provided by Burdick et al that is "an array of convergent practices that explore a universe in which print is no longer the primary medium in which knowledge is produced and disseminated".<sup>106</sup> By applying a digital humanities approach to museum collections, as discussed in Chapter 6, I argue that there is additional value for migration studies that, by nature, spans geographies and which assists in accessing information about artefacts that may otherwise be beyond physical access.

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<sup>104</sup> M. Harper and N.J. Evans, 'Socio-economic Dislocation and Inter-War Emigration to Canada and the United States: A Scottish Snapshot' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol.34 (4), December 2006, pp.529-552.

<sup>105</sup> K.E. Harman, 'The transformative power of digital humanities in teaching family history online' *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 15 (3), 2018, reproduced at <<https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol15/iss3/7>> [accessed 26/10/2018].

<sup>106</sup> Burdick, A. et al, *Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), p.122.

Access to digital sources needs arrangement if their sheer volume is to be managed. I have approached this by applying very specific search criteria, especially when using the vast range of newspapers now available online. However, these criteria need to be informed by subject knowledge first and foremost if accurate conclusions are to be drawn. So, for example, it is critical to know the chronology of the various female emigration associations. The term “Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women” will not appear in the popular press before its introduction in 1919, whereas its predecessor, the British Women’s Emigration Association too has its timeframe of operation. These factors are important, otherwise inaccurate conclusions may be drawn as to their activity.

Digital records can very quickly signpost trends and help raise research questions. For example, once ships operating through the First World War have been identified using other sources, it is possible to track activity amongst migrant women. This can be illustrated by looking at Canadian Pacific ships *Missanabie* and *Metagama* to Canada during the war. Operating between 1914 and September 1918, *Missanabie*, on its voyage on 7 July 1916, carried 224 women passengers, and over 100 children.<sup>107</sup> In September 1918, the same ship carried no female passengers. Similarly, *Metagama* of the same shipping company demonstrated comparable patterns of activity, carrying no migrant women on its voyage of 20 November 1918, days after the end of war, as compared to the almost 200 women and children travelling in July 1916.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> BT27/873/18, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0873%2f00%2f0053%2fp%2f0018f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0873000053%2f00145> [accessed 17/10/2018]; BT27/887/5, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA/BT27/0887/00/0042/P/0002F&parentid=TNA/BT27/0887000042/00021> [accessed 17/10/2018].

<sup>108</sup> BT27/887/4 <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0887%2f00%2f0108%2fp%2f0004f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0887000108%2f00036> [accessed 17/10/2018].

This simple search produces numerous queries, for example, the demand amongst women for migration, the capacity of transatlantic shipping, and the safety of transatlantic travel. Using these data alongside other available sources assists in addressing these questions.

Collectively, the range of sources used and approaches deployed serve to support the intention of my study in creating biographical approaches to British migrant women, within a context of the broader organisational environment within which migration occurred.

### **Conclusion: women's migration history and connecting themes**

In this chapter I have discussed the ways in which women's migration history connects across historiographies of empire, class, race, gender, feminism and occupational labour. By positioning my study within a structure of literature and themes, I offer a series of contexts through which I argue that migrant women, travelling from Britain during the First World War and interwar years, inherited a framework for their migration from the Victorian and Edwardian eras that was in part characterised by imperial ideologies around white racial dominance, while also bound by social and cultural attitudes towards women's role in society. This ideology, that underpinned female migration, included views on motherhood, occupation and class. While many of the patterns and traits of pre-First World War remained evident during the period of my study, I argue that the cultural, economic and political spheres that had previously locked this framework began to shift as the external forces of conflict, equality legislation and feminism impacted on it.

In the following chapters I explore how the question of women's emigration from the UK brought perpetual discussion amongst promoters of

schemes, politicians and imperialists, and the public. Women had an expected role, determined largely by class, in global British society, established alongside colonialism, which prevailed into the twentieth century. Unmarried, working-class women provided a valuable labour source, until their anticipated marriage, after which time their role was to support family through their domestic lives. Middle-class women, married or professional, played a role in embedding British cultural dominance overseas. Race underpinned these expectations, and motherhood was central to the role of white British women. Married women of all classes also migrated with their children, often following husbands who had travelled in advance to secure work and housing, another layer of the extended British global family. Demand for British migrant women was largely from rural areas where support was needed, whether as domestic workers, or wives of farmers. But many modern, working-class women resisted these requirements and migrated with the ultimate intention of settling in the rapidly developing urban areas where employment opportunities were more diverse. This created conflict with those who had designed migration initiatives to ensure that unmarried women, including widows, were restricted to employment in domestic service for a time-limited period. Perceived as problematic, both in Britain and overseas, unmarried middle-class women formed another group of migrants who pursued opportunities beyond the constraints of British society, particularly in relation to self-supporting employment.

I have chosen a chronology which has, to date, been overlooked as a continuum of migration history, to include the First World War and extend into the 1920s. This period of activity was particularly gendered, allowing me to

probe the issues pertinent to women's migration during the timeframe of an extraordinary event, yet within which can be found continuing patterns and trends of overseas movement inherited from preceding eras. By introducing facets of British domestic history that directly impacted on women, while also discussing global and imperial contexts, and by bringing in literatures that offer national perspectives of Australia and Canada specifically, I am able to present a panoramic perspective of British migrant women's history.

## **Chapter 2. Between Surplus and Motherhood:**

### **The Ideology of Female Migration**

In my dissertation I explore how the rationale and ideology that underpinned female migration were shaped by two concepts: those of surplus women and motherhood, and how migrant women manoeuvred their lives within and beyond them. The purpose of this chapter is to frame the study that follows by introducing these two constructs in more detail, discussing those historical issues of the nineteenth century, and up until 1914, around which they were built.

I have placed the concepts of surplus and motherhood in tandem, to acknowledge the clear relationship between efforts to migrate surplus women, with the intention of relieving a population imbalance in Britain, while also creating a pool of white British prospective wives and mothers in the colonies. By exploring how discourse about population and emigration was pliable in the hands of those shaping and positioning ideologies, I consider how, as the nineteenth century progressed, those same influences that framed the argument about 'surplus' shifted towards one that focused on women, marriage and motherhood and which became increasingly embedded in migration policy thinking. The relegated status of the surplus woman was compounded by the elevated position afforded to motherhood, this latter concept becoming a nodal point of social imperialist emigration policy. In order to introduce the rhetoric around surplus population, I have drawn on



newspaper content from 1800-1929, using digitised sources from English, Scottish and Welsh regions.<sup>1</sup>

### **The language of “surplus” and “motherhood” in regional newspapers**

Using contemporary reports and letters published in regional newspapers, I explore below how the political and economic debate that addressed this rapidly expanding population was framed. I discuss how the ideology of population surplus became embedded into political and popular consciousness.

Originally deployed to discuss unemployment, both agricultural and industrial, in the context of an expanding population, the discourse of surplus was applied specifically to the working class and was little concerned with gender. While application of the expression over time shifted in use and meaning, the theme of emigration was increasingly coupled to the debate as the nineteenth century progressed. This coincided with British colonisation, and overseas resettlement was identified as part of the surplus population solution.

Early nineteenth-century Britain was riven by debate about population growth, theorising driven by economists such as Thomas Malthus who in 1798 had published his influential *An essay on the principle of population*.<sup>2</sup> This issue became central to economic and political thinking throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Discussion about surplus population found prominence in popular discourse. “Excess” or “surplus” people equated to oversupply of labour and consequent poverty, and sat within the paradigm of

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<sup>1</sup> I have used digitised newspapers. This content, drawn from the British Library collections, represents the largest British newspaper digitization project to date, offering a rich insight into local, regional, and national debate around issues discussed. Reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) and [www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk](http://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk) [all accessed at various dates].

<sup>2</sup> T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1798), reproduced at <http://www.esp.org/books/malthus/population/malthus.pdf> [accessed 14/12/1018]

Malthusian principles relating to food provision and population growth.<sup>3</sup> The concept of population surplus was concurrent with increasingly sophisticated demographic data that, for the first time, provided statistical information gathered using consistent methodology through census returns.<sup>4</sup> While, during the 1820s and 1830s, the term surplus was largely applied to unemployed, low-skilled labourers, information gathered through the census activity also revealed the status of women. As the data of each decade was refined, this status became prominent in statistics, with women increasingly identified as surplus, but for gendered reasons of spinsterhood rather than unemployment.<sup>5</sup>

Demographic studies of the early nineteenth century became aligned with Malthus' projections of unsustainable population growth creating a surplus, with impoverished labouring classes and inadequate food provision the leading concerns of this scenario. This was packaged into a social problem that required economic and political solutions, and which became aligned with colonisation.<sup>6</sup> Issues relating to surplus population came into the sphere of public questioning, coinciding with a period of popular unrest and radicalism.<sup>7</sup> Dissenting voices amongst a radical forum, not least of which was William Cobbett, were at the forefront of debate. Cobbett is noteworthy for his extensive writings on agricultural concerns, including satirical works such as *Surplus population and the Poor Law Bill*, a dramatisation through which he challenged Malthusian theory.<sup>8</sup> The plot revolved around a prospective

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<sup>3</sup> P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2015*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.223-224.

<sup>4</sup> K. Levitan, 'Redundancy, the 'Surplus Woman' Problem, and the British Census, 1851-1861', *Women's History Review*, 1 7:3 (2008), pp. pp.359-376.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.362.

<sup>6</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp.223-224.

<sup>7</sup> Useful background about the social and economic context is provided in J. Belchem, *Industrialization and the Working Class* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Ltd, 1990) and P. Matthias, *The First Industrial Nation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Methuen, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> W. Cobbett, *Surplus Population And the Poor Law Bill: a Comedy In Three Acts*. (England, 1835), reproduced at <<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31822038199410;view=1up;seq=8>> [accessed 20/03/2017]. There is much

marriage between an impoverished couple striving to build a life in agricultural England, and the local squire's attempts to prevent it in order stop them "adding to that great national disease, the surplus population".<sup>9</sup>

The preoccupation with this population question, and the related issues of pauperism and the poor laws, was nationwide and central to public, political and economic debate. In 1826, the *Hampshire Chronicle* reported on a newly published tract '*Observations on the Nature, Extent and Effects of Pauperism, and on the Means of reducing it*' by a "gentleman named Walker" within which the "surplus population" was equated directly with the working class who, the author considered "might be more prudent and industrious".<sup>10</sup> By mid-century, the narrative of a surplus population pervaded debates about the failure of free trade, the rise in criminality and links to poverty.<sup>11</sup>

While class was firmly centred as the focus of the population question, the rhetoric around the plight of the impoverished working classes was not solely critical. Those people who found themselves to be "surplus" were not always judged for being inadequately "prudent and industrious". Quite often, factors such as class division and wealth, punitive governmental policy and legislation were presented as the root cause of the problem, as discussed at length by Cobbett in his *Weekly Political Register* between 1810 and 1835.<sup>12</sup> In 1840, an editorial in the *Leeds Times* firmly argued that any surplus population was a result of "some neglect or oppression on the part of the governing

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literature on the work and achievements of political activist, journalist and MP William Cobbett including J. Grande, J. Stevenson and R. Thomas (eds) *The Opinions of William Cobbett* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Cobbett, *Surplus Population*, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> *The Hampshire County Newspaper or South West of England Pilot*, 15 May 1826, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=bl%2F0000231%2F18260515%2F029%2F0002&browse=true>> [accessed 29/03/2017].

<sup>11</sup> *The Westmorland Gazette* 8 December 1849, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2F0000399%2f18491208%2f012>> and *The Leicestershire Mercury* 18 August 1849, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2F0000298%2f18490818%2f001>> [all accessed 29/03/2017].

<sup>12</sup> Cobbett's *Weekly Political Register*, reproduced at <[http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1800-01-01&date\\_offsetdate=1849-12-31&newspaper=cobbett's%20weekly%20political%20register](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1800-01-01&date_offsetdate=1849-12-31&newspaper=cobbett's%20weekly%20political%20register)> [accessed 20/05/2017].

classes".<sup>13</sup> There were also commentators who saw surplus as a signal of well-being, the relationship between produce and people positively intertwined:

Nothing in nature is more generous and bountiful to man, than the soil which he cultivates; and in proportion to the skill and knowledge he exercises upon it, so is its produce multiplied upon his hands; in the same proportion population and industry increase, the extent of population being always governed by the means of subsistence. From this surplus produce of the land, (without which there could be no such thing as surplus population,) a surplus population may be supported.<sup>14</sup>

### **The surplus population and colonisation**

Surplus population was consistently discussed alongside colonisation and opportunities for migrating people overseas. I explore below how this connection was eventually rearranged during the course of the nineteenth century to link women specifically with emigration through the prism of surplus. Correspondence between economist Malthus and Robert Wilmot-Horton, the Under Secretary of State for War and the Colonies during the 1820s and 1830s, reveals contemporary thinking about the relationship between increasing population and emigration, particularly the role of the latter in British colonisation. These letters, studied at length by R.N. Ghosh during the 1960s, reveal an increasing concern with resolving the economic challenges of population growth.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The Leeds Times*, 27 June 1840, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000336%2f18400627%2f046> [accessed 30/03/2017].

<sup>14</sup> The anonymous political commentator Cincinnatus in the *Gloucester Journal* 27 March 1815, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0000532%2F18150327%2F009%2F0003&browse=true> [accessed 28/03/2017].

<sup>15</sup> R.N. Ghosh, 'Malthus on Emigration and Colonization: Letters to Wilmot-Horton', *Economica*, New Series, 30:117 (1963), pp.45-62.

Discussions amongst leading thinkers such as Malthus and Wilmot-Horton, that filtered through to policy makers and opinion formers, meant that the increasing population was repeatedly debated in terms of an economic problem, viewed as an unsustainable surplus or excess that required attention. The coincidence with expanding British overseas colonisation offered a solution to the dilemma. Malthus had previously debated the potential relationship between managing population and emigration in 'An essay on the principle on population'.<sup>16</sup> During this period of the nineteenth century, most migration centred on the American colonies, and British labour and settlement was a vital component in exploiting resources and consolidating control over territories.<sup>17</sup> From a domestic perspective, Wilmot-Horton identified emigration as a solution to the pressures of population growth:

Colonization abroad, as a remedy for the evils of a relatively redundant population, is, and has been, with me, only a subordinate object of enquiry. I consider it only as the best labouring population from the general labour market, which I contend to be the main remedy for the distressed condition of the labouring classes of the United Kingdom, in as much as it is that superfluous labour which is not wanted by any party as a means of production, which deteriorates the condition of the whole labouring classes collectively.<sup>18</sup>

Opinion about surplus population was therefore situated as part of a broader debate that included many aspects of political concerns through the first half of the nineteenth century. Arguments on the question came from different perspectives, creating a landscape of discourse that both championed

<sup>16</sup> Ghosh, 'Malthus on Emigration' p.46. Malthus' essay was published in 1803 and contained a chapter on emigration.

<sup>17</sup> Hammerton, 'Gender and Migration', pp.157-158.

<sup>18</sup> R.N. Ghosh, 'The Colonization Controversy: R. J. Wilmot-Horton and the Classical Economists', *Economica*, New Series, 31:124 (1964), pp.385-400.

and disparaged those that fell within the bracket of surplus. As one commentator noted:

Every body knew that there was a surplus population, but the difficulty was to point them out – to say of this, that, or the other ‘He is one of the surplus population’. You could not with any certainty or confidence go up to a man in the street at random and say to him ‘Sir, you one of the surplus population; you are not wanted in this country’.<sup>19</sup>

Such ambiguity was to dissolve as the discourse of surplus became specifically applied to unmarried women, who, as the nineteenth century progressed and emigration opportunities expanded, became a target for overseas settlement projects.

### **Surplus women**

The language of surplus population of the early nineteenth century was wrapped around class, with no focus on gender. As the century progressed, however, surplus and superfluous became labels for unmarried women as the ideology was adapted and gendered to position women within a frame of marriage and motherhood. Unmarried middle-class women became particularly marginalised as a result, and a heightened sense of an imposed status developed amongst them.

This had not always been the case, however, as early in the nineteenth century women were acknowledged for the economic role in paid work alongside men. Unemployment amongst women was recognised, and people without work were not automatically considered surplus. For example, during

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<sup>19</sup> *Bury and Norwich Post*, 15 October 1834, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0000156%2F18341015%2F016%2F0003&browse=true> [accessed 29/03/2017].

1816, in the agricultural villages of Suffolk, unemployed “men, women and children” were positioned together when their impoverished condition was discussed in the published letters of a local newspaper.<sup>20</sup> However, in August 1819, parishioners of Hamilton, Scotland, met to discuss the plight of weavers in the town and to promote building works to employ labourers, while discussing what might be done for “the great number of unemployed old men, women and boys”.<sup>21</sup> This latter example, while still situating women as part of the workforce, exposes a division and a hierarchy of value attached to labour based on gender and age. I argue, in later chapters, that a century later, in the wake of the First World War, unemployment amongst women had been firmly relegated as an issue, when married working women faced extreme hostility and formal bans in some workplaces, unmarried working women were displaced from employment while also readily cast as surplus.

Revisiting women’s journeys within industrialisation is valuable as it helps explain the origins of the ideologies that created the surplus women concept, as it does theories of motherhood. In turn these underpinned emigration theory and policy directed at women. There is a range of historiographical literature that discusses the impact of industrialisation upon women’s position in society, and the consequent emergence of defined public and private spheres.<sup>22</sup> Work traditionally carried out within the home became part of the expanding factory system in which women were deployed alongside

<sup>20</sup> *The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, 14 December 1816, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001325%2f18161214%2f026>> [accessed 14/02/2017].

<sup>21</sup> *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 11 August 1819, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001255%2f18190811%2f009>> [accessed 14/02/2017].

<sup>22</sup> For further discussion see C. Hall ‘Strains in the “firm of Wife, Children and Friends”? Middle-class women and employment in early nineteenth-century England’ in P. Hudson and W.R. Lee (eds), *Women’s work and the family economy in historical perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp.106-131; P. Sharpe, *Adapting to Capitalism. Working women in the English Economy, 1700-1850* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996). Sharpe provides a useful ‘history from below’ approach to how early industrialisation affected women in agriculture and textile production and manufacturing industries.

children, and industrial work became defined along gender lines, through a process that subordinated female labour.<sup>23</sup>

Women were therefore often discussed as a labour source in tandem with children, a classification that derived from the pre-industrial domestic landscape in which offspring played a key role in the family economy alongside their mothers, and which is evident amongst British settlers in the interwar period also.<sup>24</sup> Heavy industrial activity became more associated with masculinity, while lighter manual tasks were identified with women, even if not truly representative of their actual labour.<sup>25</sup> Girls were prevented from entering skilled trades, even more so during the industrial era than before.<sup>26</sup> So, for women to claim a position in the workplace in which their skills were valued, both sociologically, but also economically, was not easily achieved. Certainly by the eighteenth century, the terminology of skilled and unskilled work lay as much in the prescribed gendered roles assigned to certain tasks as to the technical ability involved in executing them. This consequently led to the devaluing of women in the workplace, and reduced their earning capacity, as they were paid less than their male counterparts.<sup>27</sup> These sets of principles relating to women's labour served to reinforce their role as wives and mothers. The public and private spheres of society were set, with women's status and power limited to that of their domestic environment.<sup>28</sup>

### **The idealisation of motherhood**

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<sup>23</sup> There is much work around women and industrialisation spanning a number of decades including M. Berg, 'Women's work, mechanisation and the early phases of industrialisation in England' in P. Joyce (ed) *The Historical meanings of work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1989 pp.64-99.

<sup>24</sup> Berg, 'Women's Work' p.69.

<sup>25</sup> Berg, 'Women's Work' p.69.

<sup>26</sup> J. Rule, 'The property of skill in the period of manufacture' in P. Joyce, *The Historical Meanings of Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.107.

<sup>27</sup> Rule, 'The property of skill', p.108.

<sup>28</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.2.



It was during a period of popular unsettlement during the first half of the nineteenth century that the personification of a female form was used as a harmonising technique to idealise marriage and motherhood and the exemplifying moral behaviours associated with it.<sup>29</sup> This articulation of women's expected status in society coincided with increasingly sophisticated population data that revealed an excess of women, and created an environment that ostracised and encouraged a pejorative discourse about those who remained unmarried.<sup>30</sup>

In 1831 *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* published a letter from "A Young Spinster" that raised the dilemma of the "forlorn surplus of women". Placed within the column of "Notices to Correspondents", the editor introduced the letter, acknowledging the "awful results of every population return", as it affected women as "unpromising". Her letter gave early signal to an issue that became more pressing for women as the century progressed:

Sir – I am really in a fever of alarm at discovering, from every Population Return...that the ladies bear so awfully large a proportion to the men. It is not only in one place that this surplus of females exists, but in every place where the Census returns have been made...The prospect which unmarried damsels, therefore, have before them is dreary enough...It should be remembered that if even *all* the men were to get married, there still would be a forlorn surplus of women living in what has been erroneously termed "single blessedness"...P.S. Don't forget to mention in your article that every man who resolves to live single, dooms

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<sup>29</sup> D.D. Alessio, 'Domesticating 'the heart of the wild': female personifications of the colonies, 1886-1940', *Women's History Review*, 6:2 (1997), pp.239-270.

<sup>30</sup> These themes are central to Melman, *Popular Imagination*.

that unfortunate damsel to parrots and tabby cats for life...<sup>31</sup>

The anxiety present amongst women who regarded their single 'surplus' status as a threat to life fulfilment was laid bare in a single correspondence. The published letter is introduced by the newspaper's editor as illustrating an "awful" situation, reflecting a prevailing view that marriage was the preferred choice for women.<sup>32</sup> By mid-century, increasingly refined census data created a picture of demographic imbalance and allowed people to "view single women as one among many unproductive groups".<sup>33</sup> The surplus female population was "a burden" and one of the "largest ills" to society.<sup>34</sup> This pattern continued, while the value of marriage and motherhood was enthusiastically celebrated in 1858 in the pages of the *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*.

The house mother! What a beautiful, comprehensive word it is. How suggestive of all that is wise and kindly, comfortable and good! Surely, whether the lot comes to her naturally, in the happy gradations of wifehood and motherhood, or as the maiden-mistress of an adopted family, or – as one could find many instances in this in our modern England – when the possession of a large fortune received or earned, gives her, with all the cares and duties, many of the advantages of matronhood – every such woman must acknowledge that it is a solemn as well as happy thing to be mistress of a family.

<sup>31</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* 16 June 1831, reproduced at < <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000187%2f18310616%2f010> > [accessed 03/02/2017].

<sup>32</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.3.

<sup>33</sup> Levitan, 'Surplus Woman' Problem', p.361.

<sup>34</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* 22 December 1849, reproduced at < [www.findmypast.co.uk http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000267%2f18491222%2f003](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000267%2f18491222%2f003) > [accessed 30/03/2017]; *Hertford Mercury and Reformer* 5 January 1850, reproduced at < <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000352%2f18500105%2f006> > [accessed 30/03/2017].

– *A woman's thoughts about women.*<sup>35</sup>

A decade after this celebration of motherhood came the much publicised essay *Why are women redundant?* by William Rathbone Greg, pushing the question of surplus women centre stage.<sup>36</sup> The power of newspapers and journals in disseminating his published views was not lost on Greg, who saw that “Journalism is now truly an estate of the realm...It furnishes the daily reading of millions”.<sup>37</sup> By the time his piece was published, Greg, son of industrialists Samuel and Hannah, was an established essayist on social and political issues.<sup>38</sup> His views found their way into broad circulation as a result, and his publications were advertised in newspapers.<sup>39</sup> This served to further marginalise unmarried women and idealise the status of motherhood.<sup>40</sup> On a practical level, commentators such as Greg had at their disposal data about marital status as captured in the census of 1861. These emerging views, articulated by influential opinion formers such as Greg, reinforced those critical fears of “A Young Spinster”, communicated nearly three decades earlier, and created a near-impenetrable defence around the concept of surplus women that would set the scene until the outbreak of the First World War. While there existed a dissenting voice of feminism that challenged Greg's assumptions about the role of women, this had little impact and the traditional view prevailed throughout the remainder of the century.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*, 10 April 1858, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000464%2f18580410%2f086>> [accessed 30/03/2017].

<sup>36</sup> W.R. Greg, *Why are Women Redundant?* (London: M Trubner & Co, 1869).

<sup>37</sup> Williams, *Read All About It!*, p.99.

<sup>38</sup> M.B. Rose, 'Greg, William, Rathbone (1809-1881)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Volume 23* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.646-647.

<sup>39</sup> Greg's essay 'Why are Women Redundant' was promoted in newspapers in London, Cambridge and Scotland. For a range see <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?lastname=greg&keywords=why%20are%20women%20redundant>> [accessed 25/05/2016].

<sup>40</sup> The influence of W.R. Greg's essay in compounding views about unmarried women is discussed in Levitan, 'Surplus Women Problem', pp.359-360 and Vicinus, *Independent Women*, pp.3-5.

<sup>41</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.4.

Vicinus, in her work on single middle-class women, states that “the single woman at mid-century knew her marginality but was actively forbidden to look outside her home for a remedy”.<sup>42</sup> These attitudes survived through the century and an unmarried status amongst working-class women was unfavourably judged against their married peers:

Very different to the bachelor girl is the working woman, and it is to her that I pay my respectful homage.<sup>43</sup>

The language deployed in this article “The Working Woman (by a Woman)” is deliberately respectful to the working “woman”, while patronising towards the bachelor “girl”, signalling implied lack of maturity and responsibility. The writer, while praising the efforts of working women, concludes that “if I had daughters I would like to be in a position to be able to keep them at home”, situating the need to work as undesirable and dependency within the family unit a value to uphold.<sup>44</sup>

As the nineteenth century progressed and the public and private spheres of Victorian female life became entrenched, women sought ways to challenge both the construct of marriage and that of the “surplus” woman, and for middle-class women, writing became a mechanism for women to imagine alternative possibilities, and formed part of a critical response to their situation.

<sup>45</sup> This included mid-century publications such as Charlotte Yonge’s novel *The Daisy Chain: or Aspirations*, published in 1856.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, when looking at the interwar period, those anguished dilemmas of spinsterhood played out in the literature of the New Woman era can be identified.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>43</sup> *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph*, 21 April 1894, reproduced at <  
<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001701%2f18940421%2f074>>[accessed 30/03/2017].

<sup>44</sup> *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph*, 21 April 1894.

<sup>45</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.10.

Writer May Sinclair produced a series of novels during the 1920s that dealt with these persistent issues for women. Despite professional success as a financially independent, unmarried woman, Sinclair grappled with a sense of being “superfluous”.<sup>47</sup> Sinclair’s novels are rooted in her own experience. *Mary Olivier: A Life*, published in 1919, is partly autobiographical, the dénouement being Mary’s self-sacrificing choice to remain unmarried and care for her ageing mother. Such a trope, placing the protagonist in an almost saintly position, reflected the activity, in reality, of unmarried women who pursued “caring” professions such as teacher, nurse or missionary as an acceptable extension to their state of spinsterhood.<sup>48</sup> This can be extended to the lives of unmarried migrant women who pursued these very occupations, although, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, working women pushed at these boundaries during the interwar years.

While age brought to May Sinclair a continued sense of “superfluosity”, for others it was liberating. Nurse M Cadbury, writing to her sister during the late 1870s, celebrated her unmarried status:

...now happily there are blessings (that) come with getting old and  
we are able to keep up a great measure of our spirit of our youth...  
we haven’t had it crushed and trampled down by overbearing  
or warring or exacting husbands.<sup>49</sup>

## Surplus women and migration

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<sup>47</sup> S. Raitt, *May Sinclair. A Modern Victorian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p.148.

<sup>48</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.11.

<sup>49</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.11.

I have discussed in a previous section how the notion of migrating a surplus working-class population to support colonisation projects was firmly set by the mid-nineteenth century. At this stage, explicit thinking about emigration intersected with class rather than gender. However, evident across the debates of Wilmot-Horton and his fellow emigration promoters, including Edward Wakefield of the National Colonization Society, was the implicitly perceived role of women as mothers and family makers creating a sustainable labour force for the colonies.<sup>50</sup> Thinking around emigration, therefore, positioned women as actors in the colonisation process as an extension of their domestic sphere at home rather than as paid workers. Additionally, within the frame of colonial emigration came the implicit function of women to preserve and expand the British race, and here appeared seeds of imperialist ideology, in the shape of writings by Wilmot-Horton's contemporary Robert Torrens in a manuscript of 1826:

Emigration upon an extended scale would afford instantaneous relief; and while it extended the British name and the British race, with the blessings of civilisation and of rational liberty, throughout the vast regions of Canada, Southern Africa, and Australia, it would give the enlightened and energetic government which might adopt it, a claim to the gratitude of the world throughout succeeding generations.<sup>51</sup>

However, the view of women as a valuable labour force was not entirely obscured. In February 1819, a letter from James Bolton, a settler in York,

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<sup>50</sup> As outlined in Ghosh 'The Colonization Controversy'.

<sup>51</sup> D.P. O'Brien, 'Torrens on Wages and Emigration', *Economica*, New Series, 33:131, p.338, reproduced at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2552409> [accessed 22/02/2017].

Upper Canada, was published in the *Suffolk Chronicle*.<sup>52</sup> Bolton observed that for agricultural labourers with families, even those who were very poor, opportunities were promising. Women, especially, he wrote, enjoyed success “for they here earn money faster than men”.<sup>53</sup> The favourable environment of Canada as presented by Bolton was interpreted by the newspaper correspondent as providing a potential solution for the “excess of population in this country”, specifically in agricultural areas.<sup>54</sup> The label of surplus, therefore, was not exclusively applied to women, but, as evident above, had specific relevance to unemployed workers. This intersectionality of gender, class and age shifted across time periods depending on the dominant economic, political and social pressures.

As women became increasingly framed within the debate about the surplus population, emigration was viewed as a solution for this issue. For example, in 1849, the Southampton Emigration Society held a meeting at which it discussed the issue of unemployment amongst London needlewomen. The Society linked unemployment directly to the “over-crowded state of this country and excess of women over men”, the best remedy for which was “emigration to our colonies who need women”.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, as the century progressed, and the evidence of demographics exposed women as being numerically dominant, the superfluous woman stereotype was created and assumed a centrality in the Victorian psyche.<sup>56</sup> The growing movement of thought that began to place unmarried, largely

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<sup>52</sup> *The Suffolk Chronicle or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, 24 April 1819, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0001325%2F18190424%2F037%2F0003&browse=true>> [accessed 10/02/2017].

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser*, 8 December 1849, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000494%2f18491208%2f014>> [accessed 14/02/2017].

<sup>56</sup> For further detail about this positioning of women in the Victorian imagination see Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, pp.20-22.

middle-class women as surplus shared ground with emigration promoters who, similar to those of early century, saw potential solutions in overseas settlement. This shifting of the surplus construct, away from the working-class population to unmarried, educated, women, often financially dependent on male relatives, or who sought incomes through occupations such as governesses, led to a stereotyping far removed from the reality of Victorian women's lives.<sup>57</sup>

With this perception of women prominent in the popular discourse of Victorian Britain, the environment was ripe for a series of philanthropic initiatives to help resolve the surplus woman question through overseas settlement.<sup>58</sup> The transition from emigration being associated with a solution for the impoverished unemployed, including assisted schemes for women to Australia during the 1830s, to one that engaged middle-class women, was achieved through the efforts of individuals such as Caroline Chisholm and Maria Rye.<sup>59</sup> The emergence of these initiatives saw the alignment of migration destinations to British colonies, notably Australia and Canada. However, whereas Chisholm's vision was to populate colonies with British family units, as well as unmarried women who were skilled working or lower class, Rye's aim was to support and train middle-class women, for whom there was no employment in Britain, and who were excluded from assisted passages due to their lack of manual skills.<sup>60</sup> The schemes included Caroline Chisholm's British Ladies' Female Emigration Society and Family Loan Society, established in 1849, and the Female Middle Class Emigration Society founded by Maria Rye in 1862, which paved the way for the British Women's Emigration

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.11

<sup>58</sup> This is dealt with in some detail in Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.212-244.

<sup>59</sup> For discussion on this re-focus around emigration see Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, p.53.

<sup>60</sup> Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, p.128.



Association (BWEA) from 1888 onwards.<sup>61</sup> Yet, despite migrant women being viewed as an important component of the imperial machine, there was misalignment between supply and demand, in terms of skills and what recipient countries deemed to be acceptable female settlers.<sup>62</sup>

There was also a fine line between organisations such as the Female Middle Class Emigration Society offering opportunities for employment overseas for surplus women who otherwise might be destined to a life of destitution in Britain, and the organisation being perceived as a “marriage agency”.<sup>63</sup> The female emigration societies of the nineteenth century were very sensitive to this criticism, and avoided promoting marriage as a motivation for young women to settle overseas. Yet they measured their success by how many of their young women found husbands.<sup>64</sup>

In parallel with these schemes emerged the ideological positioning of migrant women, part of the notion of exporting a British system to the colonies.<sup>65</sup> An essential component of this was the perceived civilising role of women in a world of unmarried men, an extension of the “Perfect Lady” stereotype that was extended to the colonies.<sup>66</sup> For the emerging British empire, the notion of civilisation was equated with class structure, gender divide and white ethnicity.<sup>67</sup> While initially a young British migrant woman might be a source of labour, her ultimate role within the British imperial project was “to reproduce the race...maintain their men, and make families and

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<sup>61</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.225-226.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, pp.233-236.

<sup>63</sup> Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p.127.

<sup>64</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, pp.88-89.

<sup>65</sup> This idea is attributed to Edward Gibbon Wakefield's work during the 1830s. See Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlemen*, p.56 and Richards, *Britannia's Children*, pp.136-137.

<sup>66</sup> Alessio, 'Domesticating "the heart of the wild"', p.245.

<sup>67</sup> Hall, 'Of Gender and Empire', p.46.

households”.<sup>68</sup> This ideology was shared with those promoting migration initiatives, Chisholm referring to those women who migrated through her schemes as “God’s police”, expected to play a role in fulfilling their racial, class and imperial mission.<sup>69</sup>

Single migrant women were also typecast as having relaxed morals, a stereotype present across the British empire, serving to reinforce marriage and motherhood as a desirable status as well as a “beneficent domesticating presence”.<sup>70</sup> This antagonistic stance towards young unmarried women could be extreme, as illustrated by the uncompromising views of Canadian Agnes Laut in 1914:

Ten thousand Englishwomen could be ranged in a line and shot.

No one would be sorry. Everyone would be glad. There isn’t

any place for them.<sup>71</sup>

Laut was a writer and journalist who, while she relocated to the United States, remained outspoken in her Canadian nationalist views.<sup>72</sup> Her views of young migrant women pervaded Canadian society and the English girl in Canada was cast in prejudicial terms similar to those applied to young Aboriginal women, with similar correctional methods deployed to adjust what was considered to be immoral behaviour.<sup>73</sup> Similar opinion towards English migrant women was also present in Australia, particularly as the nineteenth century progressed and the country became increasingly sensitive to its role as the “dumping ground” for “Britain’s unwanted”, rooted as it was in its

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p.47.

<sup>69</sup> Alessio, ‘Domesticating “the heart of the wild”’, p.245.

<sup>70</sup> Levine ‘Sexuality’, p.137.

<sup>71</sup> Alessio, ‘Domesticating “the heart of the wild”’, p.242. Alessio attributes this quotation to Agnes ‘Lout’ not ‘Laut’ but this is likely to be a typographical error in the text of the article.

<sup>72</sup> Anne Innes Dagg, *The Feminine Gaze. A Canadian Compendium of Non-Fiction Women Authors and Their Books, 1836-1945* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), p.161.

<sup>73</sup> Sangster, ‘Domesticating Girls’ in Pickles and Rutherford, *Contact Zones*.

experience of convict transportation, and which came to include surplus women.<sup>74</sup>

These views extended into the interwar years, continuing to be featured in Canadian newspapers that, for example, reported on high numbers of young English migrant women amongst the statistics for unmarried mothers.<sup>75</sup> However, young British migrant women were not without their defenders. At a child welfare meeting in Ottawa in 1925, one attendee signalled the environment within which young women found themselves being at fault, which resulted in leaving "...the Indian girl and the immigrant girl as legitimate prey".<sup>76</sup> Such tension between young women's perceived vulnerability and immorality, and the attempt on the part of emigration promoters to control this, I explore further through the case study of a juvenile migrant in Chapter 4.

These perceptions fed into the notion of the ideal female migrant, a construct largely created through the propagandist methods of emigration societies such as the BWEA, which used its journal *Imperial Colonist* to promote its interests.<sup>77</sup> Targeted at young unmarried women, the ideal revolved, not only around behaviours, but also ideological principles that were expected to be aligned with the migrant woman's role in the "feminine civilising mission".<sup>78</sup> This thinking was largely directed at working-class women, who were deemed by emigration promoters to be more likely to diverge from expected behaviours, especially in destinations such as South Africa, where

<sup>74</sup> J. Gothard, 'Single British Female Migration to Colonial Australia' in Sharpe, *Labour Migration*, p.152.

<sup>75</sup> *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 1 October 1925, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/us-and-world-newspapers/page/view/145342176>> [accessed 25/09/2017].

<sup>76</sup> *The Lethbridge Daily Herald*, 1 October 1925, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/us-and-world-newspapers/page/view/145342176>> [accessed 25/09/2017].

<sup>77</sup> Bush, 'The Right Sort of Woman', p. 386.

<sup>78</sup> J. M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.160.

white women were working alongside employees of other races, and where the fear of interracial relationships amongst imperialists was acute.<sup>79</sup>

The ideal female migrant was also present in popular children's literature. R M Ballantyne was one of the most published writers of imperial adventure stories during the British late Victorian and Edwardian years.<sup>80</sup> Financially-accessible, by this time, to a working-class readership, Ballantyne's yarns were narratives of youthful daring and opportunity, led by boys, but also featuring girls in carefully positioned subservient roles.<sup>81</sup> For example, Ballantyne's novel *Dusty Diamonds* follows the lives of three juvenile migrants, two male and one female, who seek support through a Christian philanthropic emigration society and escape their existence of hardship to secure an idyllic life in Canada, reformed and revitalised.<sup>82</sup> The two migrant women of the novel, presented with limited personal agency, are mother and eventual wife of protagonist Bobby Frog. The pioneering son has extracted his mother from the ills of London, and Martha Mild, his wife-to-be, is pious, submissive and pliable:

The girl is little, neat and well-made, at the budding period of life, brown-haired, brown-eyed, round, soft – just such a creature as one feels disposed to pat on the head and say “My little pet!”<sup>83</sup>

Martha Mild – the very embodiment of meek, earnest simplicity, and still a mere child in face though almost a woman in years.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Bush, 'The Right Sort of Woman', p.396

<sup>80</sup> Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp.89-90.

<sup>81</sup> For the increasing accessibility of empire fiction to working-class readers see R. Irvine 'Separate Accounts: Class and Colonization in the Early Stories of R.M. Ballantyne', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 12:2 (2007), pp.245-6.

<sup>82</sup> R.M. Ballantyne, *Dusty Diamonds* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1907).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.366.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.409.

I explore further the divergence from expected behaviours of migrant women, providing a contrast to the fictional Martha Mild in Chapter 4. There I discuss real women who pursued opportunities overseas through juvenile migration schemes during the 1920s. Far from the submissive caricature of the ideal female migrant presented by Ballantyne, these young women sought their own paths and, if too non-compliant, saw the imperial-bounded benevolence of emigration promoters fall quickly away.

**Imperial motherhood: “Nursing Mothers of the English race to be.”<sup>85</sup>**

Overseas settlement cannot be effectively discussed without an understanding of British resettlement as a driver for white racial dominance, and the centrality of motherhood within this. The role of migrant women during the nineteenth century was not only one of a civilising force. Converting the surplus women into wives and mothers was a critical part of the growing imperial mechanism, and, through their marriage to white British settlers, was an expansive role:

Their front-line work was not only to generate the new and better offspring who would carry the imperial work ever forward but to preserve the race and its morals in the colonial wilderness. They were to block miscegenation, to lift up the lower ‘races’... and most importantly, they were to mark and maintain the boundaries of whiteness.<sup>86</sup>

The journal *Imperial Colonist* carefully placed letters from migrant women who had “discovered personal happiness through marriage”, the content of which indulged in “descriptive length upon the uncomplicated joys of

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<sup>85</sup> Hammerton *Emigrant Gentlewomen* p.163. From a poem by Dora Gore-Browne written in 1904 ‘To England’s Daughters’. A favourite of the BWEA and given to some of its recruits.

See Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.226.

<sup>86</sup> Devereux, *Growing a Race*, p.55.

home-building".<sup>87</sup> Motherhood was, therefore, not only situated as an antidote to being surplus and single, a status for young women to aspire to, but was also increasingly positioned as part of empire building. The two constructs arrived at polarised positions, constantly pushed by ideological thinking and popular discourse. By the end of the nineteenth century, emigration had been firmly established around a dual rationale of resolving the surplus women question and providing white wives for white settlers. The nineteenth century was one that celebrated that role of motherhood and family, including leading feminists who at once used empire to promote the expansion of women's lives while placing it within the traditional paradigm of marriage.<sup>88</sup>

The role of motherhood in British migration was hugely significant for two main reasons. As discussed above, the Victorian ideal of the mother, an elevated position of importance, yet firmly contained within the domestic sphere, was a crucial export to the British colonies during the nineteenth century, a civilising influence within a settler society dominated by men.<sup>89</sup> More important to this study, as being relevant to the interwar years, is the emergence of "imperial motherhood", situated by Hyam as a "fall-out" of the national concern around health and fitness exposed as a result of the South African War early in the twentieth century.<sup>90</sup> The national ideology of motherhood therefore intersected with imperialism, and yet was not a twentieth-century phenomenon, as Alessio illustrates in his study on the idealisation of women in the British colonies from the mid-nineteenth century

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<sup>87</sup> Bush, 'The Right Sort of Woman', p.399.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.4.

<sup>89</sup> The role of migrant women as a civilising, domesticating force is comprehensively discussed by Hammerton in *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, Chilton, *Agents of Empire* and Bush 'The Twentieth Century'.

<sup>90</sup> Hyam, 'The British Empire', pp. 50-51.

onwards.<sup>91</sup> This elevated position of women, albeit idealised, was seized on by the first wave of British feminism within which middle-class voices were the most dominant, and placed marriage and motherhood as critical components of nationalism.<sup>92</sup> “Imperial motherhood” therefore had an impenetrable foundation by the advent of the 1920s, and was bolstered by the domestic landscape of the popularity of eugenics and a backlash against young single women.<sup>93</sup> Between 1880 and 1930 the birth-rate in England declined by 52%, suggesting that women were less devoted to the idea of motherhood and reinforcing Gothard’s point that not all prioritised either marriage or children.<sup>94</sup>

The bedrock of the first wave of feminism that emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a celebration of the role of motherhood and family.<sup>95</sup> Its position became intertwined with two movements: that of British imperialism, and eugenics. The political work in Britain on migration perpetuated this ideal, and continued to position women within a paradigm of motherhood and race, and, through overseas settlement and marriage, demarcated the “boundaries of whiteness”.<sup>96</sup> The New Woman movement is mentioned above, partly as a route through which women might play out, in fiction, lives beyond the constraints of their domestic environments. The literary exchange between British writers Sarah Grand and Ouida, played out in the pages of the *North American Review*, forged the New Woman movement of the late nineteenth century and placed it as a global and influential cultural force.<sup>97</sup> The movement had a complex relationship with

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<sup>91</sup> Alessio, ‘Domesticating “the heart of the wild”’, pp. 239-270.

<sup>92</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.8.

<sup>93</sup> Hyam argues that ‘imperial motherhood’ and the rise of eugenics were by products of the South African War. Hyam, ‘The British Empire’, pp.50-51.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.11.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>96</sup> Devereux, *Growing a Race*, pp.114-5.

<sup>97</sup> M.H. Patterson (ed), *The American New Woman Revisited* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), p.29.

motherhood, eugenics and feminism. Sarah Grand, herself a eugenicist, described women as “the mothers of the English race”.<sup>98</sup> From the broader British feminist movement of the early twentieth century, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy stridently declared that the mother “risks her life for the perpetuation and progress of the race”.<sup>99</sup>

Motherhood, therefore, became a hugely potent concept that placed women in a powerful ideological position as responsible for the “breeding and care of new citizens”.<sup>100</sup> Rather than rejecting the notion of marriage, the New Woman movement embraced it as an ideal, and sought flexibility within it as a way of celebrating the role of women, not only as mothers, but also as mothers of the race.<sup>101</sup> Other celebrants of motherhood included Australian activist Mrs Harrison Lee, who while lecturing on a tour of Britain in 1896, referred to the “holy office of motherhood”.<sup>102</sup> The terminology served to ensure the elevated status was protected, as well as situating it across the British dominions. Bessie Harrison Lee added a rare working-class voice to a debate otherwise dominated by middle- class women. Harrison had a celebrated profile, and was active in working women’s rights and the temperance movement.<sup>103</sup>

Within the framing of women’s suffrage, the role of marriage and motherhood was also secured. For American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, suffrage was the route through which women would reclaim their control over motherhood and family.<sup>104</sup> In the poem “Reassurance” by

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p.34.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.12.

<sup>100</sup> Devereux, *Growing a Race*, p.27.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p.24.

<sup>102</sup> *The Woman’s Signal*, 20 August 1896, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0002232%2F18960820%2F007%2F0002&browse=true>> [accessed 07/10/2018].

<sup>103</sup> The Encyclopaedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth Century Australia, reproduced at

<<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0622b.htm>> [accessed 23/10/2018].

<sup>104</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.30.



Charlotte Perkins Gilman (later Perkins Stetson), the position of motherhood in the new world of gender equality was reaffirmed:

Peace then! Fear not the coming women, brother!

Owning herself she giveth all the more!

She shall be a better woman, wife and mother

Than man hath known before.<sup>105</sup>

At a public meeting of the Women's International Progressive Union in 1896, the role of motherhood was even likened to that of Christ's: "the life and personality of Christ were essentially that of a mother...Christ was mother to all".<sup>106</sup>

By the First World War, left-wing politics also played a part in bolstering the ideal of motherhood as a function of the public sphere. In 1916 Margaret Llewelyn Davies, head of the socialist Women's Cooperative Guild, declared that "the progress of the country can best be served by raising motherhood to a position of power and equality".<sup>107</sup> As well as being present within feminist and political spheres, themes of marriage and motherhood were present across popular culture during the interwar years, not least within the genre of empire romances.<sup>108</sup> This was a significant shift away from the empire literature of prewar Britain, constructed around masculinity and narratives of pioneering emigration that writers such as Ballantyne promoted, and in which women were marginalised.<sup>109</sup> The empire romance replaced the traditional "mill lass" stories of popular women's and girls' magazines, and took young, adventurous women on travels, where they both satisfied their wanderlust and

<sup>105</sup> *The Woman's Signal*, 6 August 1896, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0002232%2f18960806%2f008> [accessed 07/10/2018].

<sup>106</sup> *The Woman's Signal*, 22 October 1896, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0002232%2f18961022%2f009> [accessed 07/20/2018].

<sup>107</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.116.

<sup>108</sup> Melman, *Popular Imagination*, p.137.

<sup>109</sup> Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, pp.89-91.

were introduced to the settled world of marriage and overseas life.<sup>110</sup> Set in the “white dominions”, the weekly short stories presented independent and confident female migrants enjoying the adventure and freedom of empire, with the promise of a husband, but free from the taint of moral and racial corruption, reaffirming an imperialist view of racial and cultural superiority.<sup>111</sup> Migrant women were becoming part of the powerful imagery that defined the imperialist ideal of empire. As Bush argues:

White womanhood symbolised the importance of the white  
Dominions, reflecting women’s central role in ‘domesticating  
the heart of the wild’, taming marauding ‘frontier masculinities’  
and securing the stability and racial purity of the white empire.<sup>112</sup>

### **The surplus woman, war and aftermath**

The prevalence of surplus or superfluous women is marked within the sources as the twentieth century emerged, especially during the immediate interwar years.<sup>113</sup> When, in the aftermath of the First World War, journalists highlighted “Where There Are “Surplus” Men” with reference to Australia, a supporting strapline defined the expected response from women, “Marriage Prospects in Australia – for Girls”.<sup>114</sup> The journalists of the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* similarly saw the surplus men of New Zealand as offering “Women’s Way to Salvation”.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Melman, *Popular Imagination*, pp.135-136.

<sup>111</sup> Bush, ‘The Twentieth Century’, p.87.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, p.87.

<sup>113</sup> The years 1920-1929 return the highest search results for both terms, reflecting the national preoccupation with the issue in the aftermath of the First World War, reproduced at <[http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1900-01-01&date\\_offsetdate=1949-12-31&keywords=surplus%20women](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1900-01-01&date_offsetdate=1949-12-31&keywords=surplus%20women)> and <[http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1900-01-01&date\\_offsetdate=1949-12-31&keywords=superfluous%20women](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1900-01-01&date_offsetdate=1949-12-31&keywords=superfluous%20women)> [accessed 18/05/2017]. It should be noted that articles were commonly replicated across newspapers, so occurrences are duplicated as a result.

<sup>114</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, August 11 1921, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000563%2f19210811%2f106>> [accessed 19/05/2017].

<sup>115</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 5 January 1920, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000563%2f19200105%2f113>> [accessed 19/05/2017].

The preoccupation with a surplus female population and the efforts to sustain migration as a solution offers an alternative narrative to that which celebrates women's contribution to the war effort. The role of women within motherhood became more heightened as the impact of the conflict took hold. *The Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, in March 1915, envisaged a postwar world, in which the war had decimated:

Two hundred thousand young lives full of promise...of potentiality  
for the future of the race suddenly came to a dead end.<sup>116</sup>

The emphasised role of young men as prospective fathers and increase of spinsters fuelled a race question that ran through discussion about empire growth and population. The national obsession with young unmarried surplus women during the 1920s was discernible in debate about interracial marriage, ignited through the war years by popular fiction such as Annesley Kennealy's novel *A Water-Fly's Wooing: a drama in black and white marriages* published in 1914 and given a platform in regional newspapers, such as through the letter below, published in the *Sheffield Daily Independent* a few months after the outbreak of war:

Sir – Where are the husbands of the future to come from?  
Is the problem of the moment. The world-war is causing an  
appalling mortality among men of a marriageable age, and  
a corresponding increase in the already overwhelming  
surplus of women. Some ethnologists settle the problem  
by advocating marriage between white women and black  
or coloured men. Miss Annesley Kennealy's new novel  
'A Water-Fly's Wooing' deals with this absorbing question.

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<sup>116</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, Friday March 26 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

'Is this the price of Empire?..' she asks. If so, are we prepared to pay it?<sup>117</sup>

The need for a sustainable white British population was the ideological driver for many, and, in the face of postwar population imbalance, polygamy was popular amongst some in the eugenics movement.<sup>118</sup> Motherhood intersected with eugenics, and the national fear of racial health and fitness that had been prompted by the South African wars re-emerged during the 1920s. Racial preservation was a concern of equal standing, built on a notion that the fittest men had been killed in the war, and that the pool of prospective fathers was dominated by "feeble-mindedness" and "degenerates".<sup>119</sup> At the core of eugenicist thinking was the role of women as mothers and bearers of what were considered to be healthy children.<sup>120</sup> The impact on women of eugenicist thinking also compounded traditional attitudes towards their role as propagators of the white race through child bearing. Some eugenicists were equally critical of middle and working-class women who sought lives beyond the domestic sphere, whether through the pursuit of career or the rejection of marriage.<sup>121</sup>

Once settled in the empire destination of their choice, there was no bar to interracial marriages. However, as Bush, Levine and Chilton discuss, the society into which women arrived, as much as the one from which they left, made life very difficult for those women who chose not to comply with their anticipated role. This, after all, was one of the very reasons why imperialists so

<sup>117</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, Tuesday 17 November 1914. <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

<sup>118</sup> A. Richardson, 'Eugenics and Freedom at the Fin de Siècle' in L. Henson et al (eds) *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.278.

<sup>119</sup> Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, pp.94-96.

<sup>120</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.173.

<sup>121</sup> L. Bland and L. Hall 'Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole' in A. Bashford and P. Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), reproduced at <<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org>> [accessed 23 January 2017].

actively encouraged women to migrate during the nineteenth century: as potential brides to white male settlers. Chilton takes the argument further, interpreting women's role in empire settlement as that of creator of the "motherland".<sup>122</sup> Rather than see challenges to attitudes towards interracial marriages, Levine argues that this period witnessed an increase of intolerance that took the form, during the 1920s, of legislation, in parts of the empire, to discourage anything but all-white liaisons.<sup>123</sup>

Much attention was given to the profile of people entering Canada from Europe, for example. An editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in 1923 framed inward migration a "menace" and talked of inward migration from "subnormal" people from Russia, Poland and Italy as a "threat".<sup>124</sup> This "menace from within", that aligned disability with delinquency, both of which were seen to threaten national general health, provided another platform on which eugenicists promoted their thinking.<sup>125</sup> But preventative measures, including biological controls such as sterilisation, favoured by many feminist social reformers, also took on an enhanced prejudice, as demonstrated through the targeting of Indian and Metis peoples in Alberta during the 1920s.<sup>126</sup>

While there were challenges through the wartime years to the categorisation of unmarried women as surplus or superfluous, and a rejection of women's leading role as being that of marriage and motherhood, there were fewer voices that challenged the associated role of white British women existing to further the imperial race. Sustained discussion supported ideologies of women's role as a domesticating force overseas, through settlement,

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<sup>122</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, Chapter 4.

<sup>123</sup> Levine, 'Sexuality', p.140.

<sup>124</sup> *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16 1923, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/us-and-world-newspapers/page/view/127491501>> [accessed 05/09/2017].

<sup>125</sup> Devereux, *Growing a Race*, p.7.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p.7.

marriage and motherhood. The preservation and dominance of a white population was firmly planted within such thinking. Women, therefore, slotted into this imperial ideal that exported prevalent British structures overseas.

However, public opinion amongst women challenging the matter of surplus women and migration had found common ground during the war. In October 1915, the *Daily Mirror* dedicated a column to letters on the issue of “‘Superfluous’ women”<sup>127</sup> Views ranged from that of “A Woman of Thirty” and “One of the Superfluous Women” to those of a “Eugenist”. “A Woman of Thirty” for example, quoted the example of Edith Cavell and her life dedicated to nursing prior to her wartime execution in Belgium. The letter writer was vehemently opposed to the idea of migrating surplus women, “Can we *afford* to let our women emigrate? Is this to be the reward of all their heroism in this war? The fact of not being married. What a fuss some of us make about it.” “One of the Superfluous Women” dismissed the proposal of female emigration as “ludicrous”, with a plea to stop describing any women as “superfluous”:

Leave the women alone, for heaven’s sake...A woman loves  
her own country as a man...and does not want to go adventuring  
as an emigrant in search of - not a twin soul – but in nine times  
out of ten a task master.<sup>128</sup>

“Eugenist” agreed with her fellow correspondents about the issue of women and emigration, “ultimately emigration can be no solution to the problem of superfluous women”.<sup>129</sup>

The immediate aftermath of war witnessed mass reaction to the perceived problem of surplus women. Largely rooted in a fear of

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<sup>127</sup> *Daily Mirror*, October 19, 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 15/05/2016].

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

enfranchisement of women under the age of thirty that would create a majority female electorate, unmarried young women became a target for media discourse, which became “aggressively verbose”.<sup>130</sup> The British government targeted these young working women as migrants through the Empire Settlement Act, at the same time constraining work opportunities overseas within the increasingly unpopular domain of domestic service.<sup>131</sup> However, this activity overlooked the findings of a Royal Commission report published in 1917 that identified most “surplus” women as living in heavily-industrialised areas, especially mining locations, and therefore unlikely to adapt well to the rural geography of the dominions where labour was needed, as well as being elderly and therefore not meeting the profile of prospective imperial mother.<sup>132</sup>

The acute self-consciousness played out amongst women began to be tinged with a more trenchant stance during the interwar years. Women began to challenge the surplus and superfluous labels, buoyed by their wartime experiences, growing independence and enfranchisement, a mood captured in a poem, by ‘ONE OF THE SURPLUS’, published in Lincolnshire’s *Grantham Journal*:

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<sup>130</sup> Melman, *Popular Imagination*, p.16.

<sup>131</sup> Chapter 5 of this study provides a detailed analysis of working-women’s responses to the Empire Settlement Act.

<sup>132</sup> Blakeley, ‘The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women’, p.424.

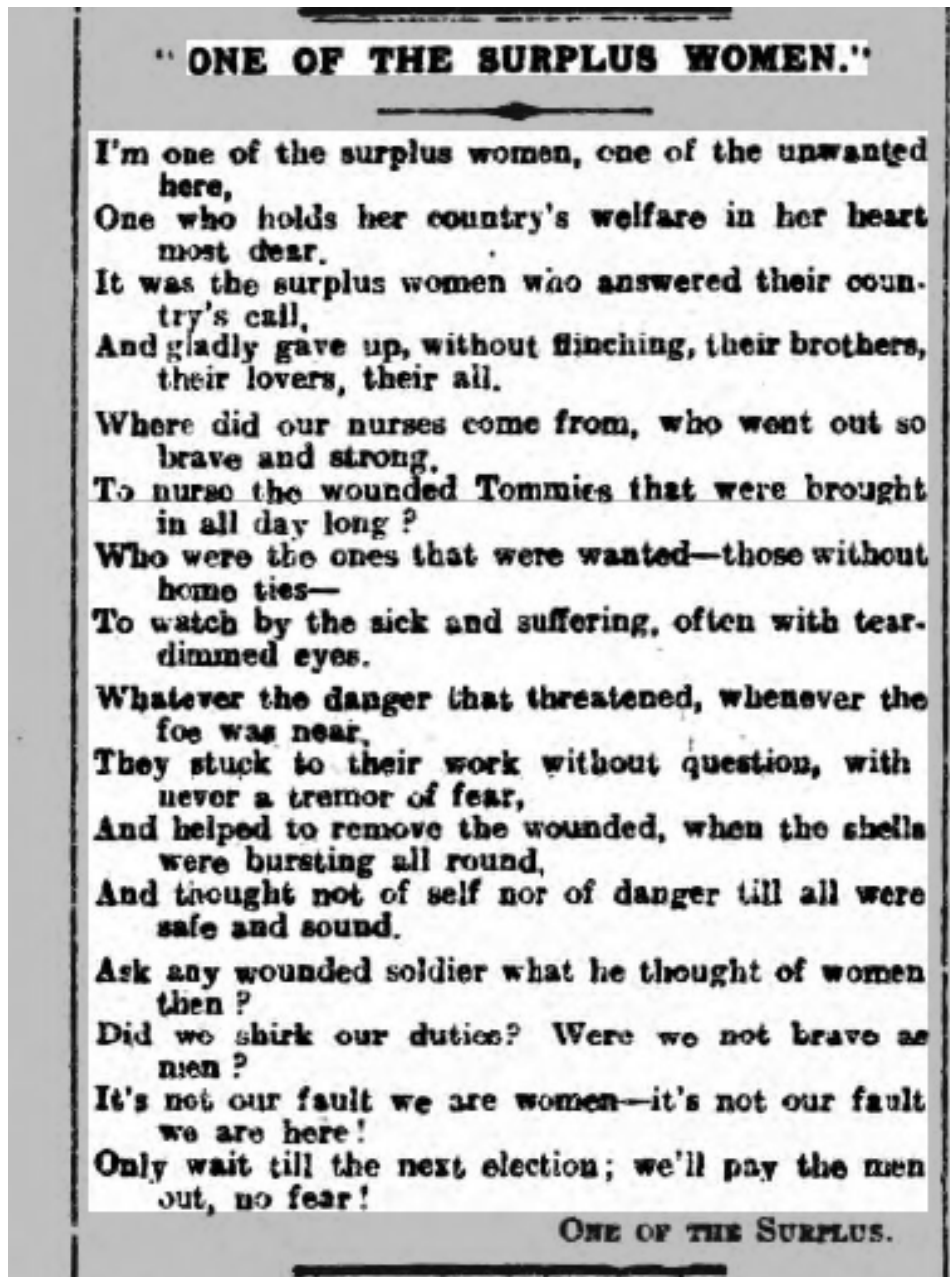


Figure 2.1 "One of the Surplus Women" <sup>133</sup>

This individual voice was reinforced more formally by the National Council of Women when its President, Countess Selborne, declared at the 1921 conference that the "question of superfluous women seemed to be afflicting some elderly gentlemen....At present the single woman could earn her

<sup>133</sup> *Grantham Journal*, 13 March 1920, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000400%2f19200313%2f101> [accessed 19/05/2017].



living more easily than her brother".<sup>134</sup> Similarly, Labour MP Margaret Bondfield, speaking at the Trade Union Congress in the same year, announced "There are no superfluous women...All women are wanted".<sup>135</sup>

The stance towards women, particularly those who were young, working class and financially independent, was not confined to "some elderly gentlemen". Rather, this was a trend driven through British society, and which found platforms across popular culture, not least in printed media and fiction, situated in the popular psyche and which created a mass "obsession with the young female".<sup>136</sup> This was not a preoccupation in which women's newly discovered autonomy was affirmed, but rather a reactionary perspective, which led to a re-interpretation of "surplus" or "superfluous". Concurrent to the debate about post-First World War population imbalance was an additional layer to the discourse about women, never far from the pages of printed media.

The shifting, again, of the ideology underpinning these attitudes now saw working women as a target. The combining factors of women's work experiences during the war and favourable legislation in its immediate aftermath created a new theatre within which they could operate.<sup>137</sup> However, while many women continued to work, unemployment was also an issue, though not viewed as a female problem.<sup>138</sup> This created a new cohort of women to target for migration: unmarried, unemployed and therefore surplus. As women claimed more economic and social independence, entrenched ideologies jarred with their revised expectations. While conservative

<sup>134</sup> *The Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 28 September 1921, reproduced at

<<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000576%2f19210928%2f080>> [accessed 19/05/2017].

<sup>135</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 5 September 1921, reproduced at

<<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000273%2f19210905%2f161>> [accessed 19/05/2017].

<sup>136</sup> Melman, *Popular Imagination*, p.2.

<sup>137</sup> Legislation included the Representation of the People Act 1918 which enfranchised women over 30 who met property qualifications, and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 which, in theory, opened up work opportunities for women.

<sup>138</sup> G. Holloway, *Women and work in Britain since 1840* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp.147-148.

traditionalists applied further rhetoric, reinventing “superfluous” women as “flappers” and railing against their behaviours, I argue that it was these very women who rejected the conditional terms of migration that situated them in a paradigm increasingly at odds with them.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed how popular and political discourse about the concept of surplus population became specific to women through the introduction of gendered applications of the term. I have demonstrated how related intersecting ideologies of work, class and gender were manoeuvred through the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century to support migration policy that revolved around colonial expansion and imperialism. While surplus and superfluous were applied differently at different times, the framework within which this occurred remained an ideological constant. The associated discourse was manipulated by opinion formers, such as eugenicists, to align theoretical thinking that positioned women within a confined societal role that extended to their perceived purpose as migrants. By the interwar period, women were reacting against the surplus woman construct, a rebuttal played out in the columns of the popular press. By 1914, the triangulation of migration, surplus women and motherhood was firmly mapped. The next chapters will look in detail at how women engaged with this ideology that underpinned migration policy, and to what extent it framed the opportunities in practice to move overseas, and how women, at a personal and practical level, responded during the First World War and the subsequent decade.

### Chapter 3. Women, War and Migration

This chapter focuses on the lives of women who left the UK during the First World War, thereby filling a gap in the historiography of British twentieth-century migration. It also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of women's experience of the First World War, adding to the literature that identifies gender-specific aspects of the conflict. In the following pages I argue that outward movement from the UK during the First World War retained patterns of the migration era it followed, while also presenting characteristics specific to the extraordinary environment within which it occurred. I discuss these aspects in the context of women's roles, augmenting the previous chapter's discussion of motherhood and surplus women.

#### **Between Great Migration and empire settlement**

Outward movement from Britain during the First World War features little in existing literature. As discussed earlier, detailed discussion tends to focus on policy activity as a backdrop to the emergence of the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, and the brief preceding initiative to migrate former service personnel as part of the postwar reconstruction efforts. Existing work references targeting women for migration, the central theme of the chapter, but what it overlooks is that actual migration that took place during the war as a continuing trend of outward movement from Britain and which can be situated within what Constantine, referring to the interwar years, describes as a "propensity to emigrate amongst British people".<sup>1</sup> This chapter is therefore critical in providing a relationship between the era of migration up until 1914,

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<sup>1</sup> Constantine 'Introduction' in Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, p.1.

and that which was framed by empire settlement in the aftermath of the First World War. It is also important in adding to the understanding of women's migration activity that dominated the period and yet remains largely obscured. The study below brings in a range of material that I use to analyse the relationship between British migration and women's labour during the First World War. This includes sources relating directly to emigration, namely British outgoing passenger lists, records of the British Women's Emigration Association (BWEA) and Salvation Army, and also material that provides the domestic context of the First World War such as regional newspapers, and correspondence of the War Emergency Workers National Committee.<sup>2</sup>

With women facing underemployment and men away on military service, migration became specifically female-gendered. Women became a heightened target for shipping companies and emigration promoters who were pursuing their respective business interests as best they could in the context of war. Cohorts within which women migrated during the war included married couples, family groups, and unaccompanied mothers and children as well as unmarried women. However, these profiles shifted as the conflict unfolded, with the latter two groupings becoming increasingly dominant. Coinciding with this setting for migration were waning opportunities for men to relocate due to the demands of military action, coupled with popular anti-emigration sentiment.

The wartime era also saw sustained activity on the part of migration societies, including the BWEA and the Salvation Army, which worked with shipping companies to protect and continue the work established during the previous phase of migration. Related activity on the part of the British government during the First World War laid the foundations for empire

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1 for the introduction to these sources.

settlement, and included a revival of the debate around surplus women.<sup>3</sup> While empire settlement became a dominant agenda amongst emigration promoters and government policy-shapers as the war progressed, not all British migrants were drawn towards empire destinations, as illustrated through the example of Laura Francatelli later in the chapter. The USA remained a popular target for British settlers, continuing a trend set during the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

However, while this direction of British migration continued, as the influence of British policy direction emerged, empire destinations were promoted through propaganda and advertising, bolstered by the activity of the emigration societies which ensured a shift from the USA to the British dominions being the destination of choice.<sup>5</sup> For example, Cunard Line ship *Lusitania*, travelling from Liverpool to New York in April 1915, carried 826 British subjects, 347 of whom were unaccompanied women.<sup>6</sup> However, as the war progressed, a shift in transatlantic travel towards Canada is discernible. Cunard Line ship *Saxonia* sailing a year later from Liverpool to New York, in August 1916, carried only 91 British passengers.<sup>7</sup> By comparison, Canadian Pacific ship *Missanabie*, on a voyage in June 1916 to Canada, carried 452 passengers, most of whom were unaccompanied women and children.<sup>8</sup>

Wartime migration activity was, therefore, segmented into three interrelated movements: the emergence of a dominant female-gendered profile to outward migration; the repositioning of the existing architecture of overseas settlement in response to the wartime environment, increasingly framed by the

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<sup>3</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> Richards, *Britannia's Children*, p.287.

<sup>5</sup> Until the end of the nineteenth century, two thirds of people leaving the British Isles chose the USA as their destination. See Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p.68.

<sup>6</sup> Passenger List, *Lusitania*, April 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)>. This figure is the total for all passengers, not all of whom would have been migrants.

<sup>7</sup> Passenger List, *Saxonia*, August 1916, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)>.

<sup>8</sup> Passenger List, *Missanabie*, June 1916, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)>.

ideology and design of empire settlement; and the continuation of prewar trends of movement.

### The regendering of wartime emigration

It is clear that the war impacted significantly on passenger travel. Constantine discusses interwar migration as a continuation of prewar activity, largely disregarding wartime movement, and Richards estimates that, between 1915 and 1918, only 150,402 individuals left Britain for non-European destinations.<sup>9</sup> Australia saw an overall net decrease of immigration in the first two years of the war, as well as a significant decline in assisted passages that dropped from 20,805 in 1914 to 5,796 the following year.<sup>10</sup> By 1918 the figure had plummeted to 326.<sup>11</sup> The table below, compiled from a search of statistics within digitised passenger manifests, illustrates how numbers of people leaving the UK fell dramatically during wartime, placing migration as a far less important factor in most people's lives than it had been for the preceding decades. Charted statistically across this timeframe, the years 1914-1918 would barely be discernible.<sup>12</sup> However, thousands of people, notably women and children, did leave the UK to settle overseas during the First World War, and by bringing a more qualitative approach to this aspect of migration historiography, the chapter opens up a significance beyond statistics.

1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
239,497	127,545	24,163	23,547	10,113	5,806

<sup>9</sup> Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, p.1; Richards, *Britannia's Children*, p.235.

<sup>10</sup> Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia. No. 10 1917, pp115-116, reproduced at [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/BB0FECF534E135D2CA257AEF00164B6A/\\$File/13010\\_1901\\_1916%20section%204.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/BB0FECF534E135D2CA257AEF00164B6A/$File/13010_1901_1916%20section%204.pdf) [accessed 09/05/2016].

<sup>11</sup> Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia. No. 12 1919, p.123, reproduced at [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/\\$File/13010\\_1901\\_1918%20section%204.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/$File/13010_1901_1918%20section%204.pdf) [accessed 09/05/2016].

<sup>12</sup> To put this figure into context, Constantine estimates that over 16 million people left the UK between 1815 and 1914. See Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, p.1.

Numbers of passengers travelling from the UK to Canada, 1913-1918.<sup>13</sup>

1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
70,533	44,372	13,386	5,778	1,740	2,169

Numbers of passengers travelling from the UK to Australia, 1913-1918.<sup>14</sup>

1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
325,816	222,420	58,563	45,941	16,020	15,772

Numbers of passengers travelling from the UK to USA, 1913-1918.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3.1 Table showing the trajectory of passenger movement from the UK to the USA, Canada and Australia during the First World War.

Figures for women - and men - travelling in the wake of August 1914 are relatively high for all leading destinations, that is, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The outbreak of war triggered the return of many unaccompanied women, with children, presumably visiting relatives in the UK when war broke out. These women, who can be identified by their last permanent residence being listed as “British Possessions”, inflate the female passenger figures during the autumn and winter of 1914. For example, a closer look at the passenger manifest of the Orient Line ship *Osterley*, travelling from London via South Africa to Australian ports in December 1914, shows a high proportion of returning South African and Australian residents.

<sup>13</sup> Figures drawn from a search of passenger totals, reproduced at <[https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration/and\\_passenger-lists?eventyear=1916&eventyear\\_offset=2](https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration/and_passenger-lists?eventyear=1916&eventyear_offset=2)>. Note that these figures include all passengers, not just migrants, but remain indicative of an overall downward trend as a subset of travellers. [accessed 13/06/2018].

<sup>14</sup> Figures drawn from a search, reproduced at <[https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration/and\\_passenger-lists?eventyear=1916&eventyear\\_offset=2](https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration/and_passenger-lists?eventyear=1916&eventyear_offset=2)> See additional note at footnote 6. [accessed 13/06/2018].

<sup>15</sup> Figures drawn from a search, reproduced at <[https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration/and\\_passenger-lists?eventyear=1916&eventyear\\_offset=2](https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration/and_passenger-lists?eventyear=1916&eventyear_offset=2)> See additional note at footnote 6. [accessed 13/06/2018].

This is not the case, however, for travellers to Canada about the same time. The profile of emigrants on the first voyage of *Missanabie* in October 1914 was not dissimilar to that of prewar passages, made up of farmers and their families, agricultural and building labourers, and domestic workers. There was, however, more than double the number of unaccompanied women on *Missanabie*'s maiden voyage than on Canadian Pacific ship *Empress of Ireland*, a larger vessel, travelling in February 1914.<sup>16</sup> Although no assisted passages were offered to emigrants travelling to Canada, it was nearer, and cheaper, for people to settle. This number of women, mostly aged about 20, points towards a connection between unemployment and emigration. The majority of women listed their occupation as "domestic", so giving no clue to any previous trade, although the port of Liverpool, from where the vessel sailed, was the nearest departure point for the leading textile areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire.<sup>17</sup> Throughout 1916 the number of married couples travelling to Canada on *Missanabie* had dropped considerably, from 65 on 7 October 1915, weeks prior to shipping companies introducing policies refusing fares to men of military age, to ten on 2 February 1917.<sup>18</sup> The shift in the migrant profile as war progressed is evident in voyages to Canada and Australia. For example, in April 1915 *Missanabie* carried 31 married couples, 164 unaccompanied women and 204 unaccompanied men.<sup>19</sup> By early 1917, as well as a clear downward trajectory of passengers overall, the same vessel

<sup>16</sup> BT27/832/22, Outward passengers, *Empress of Ireland*, 9 February 1914, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 25/05/2016].

<sup>17</sup> BT 27 Passenger List, *Missanabie*, October 1914, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0880%2f00%2f0118%2fp%2f0008f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0880000118%2f00092>> [accessed 09/05/2016].

<sup>18</sup> BT 27 Passenger List, *Missanabie*, October 1914, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0880%2f00%2f0118%2fp%2f0008f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0880000118%2f00092>> [accessed 09/05/2016].

<sup>19</sup> BT27/860/20, Outgoing Passengers, Canadian Pacific Line ship *Missanabie*, Liverpool to Canada 9 April 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0860%2f00%2f0001%2fp%2f0020f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0860000001%2f00234>> [accessed 27/08/2018].



listed ten married couples, 93 unaccompanied women and 33 unaccompanied men.<sup>20</sup>

While overall net migration to destinations such as Australia plummeted, there are hints within the statistics towards more buoyant migration activity amongst women, demonstrated through the statistics available in the Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia of 1919.<sup>21</sup> During the period 1916-1918, net migration to Australia presented a deficit of 136,164 people, but with a negative figure of only 1,687 women. A closer look at the statistics for female net migration for the states of New South Wales and South Australia shows a small positive figure of 3,384 and 3,172 respectively, while comparative figures for men were minus 42,197 and minus 16,457 respectively.<sup>22</sup> A small detail, and yet one that points towards a trend that immediately sets British women's experience of wartime migration apart, and presents potential for an alternative, and largely unwritten, history. While these figures do not identify origin amongst incoming people to Australia, the dominance of the UK as a leading and established source of newcomers suggests that this is from where the majority of these women arrived.<sup>23</sup>

### **“Don’t Think of Emigrating.”**

<sup>20</sup> BT27/880/8 Outgoing Passengers, Canadian Pacific Line ship *Missanabie*, Liverpool to Canada, 2 February 1917, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0880%2f00%2f0118%2fp%2f0008f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f08800000118%2f00092> [accessed 09/05/2016].

<sup>21</sup> Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia 1919, reproduced at [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/\\$File/13010\\_1901\\_1918%20section%204.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/$File/13010_1901_1918%20section%204.pdf) [accessed 09/05/2016]

<sup>22</sup> Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia 1919, reproduced at [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/\\$File/13010\\_1901\\_1918%20section%204.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/$File/13010_1901_1918%20section%204.pdf) [accessed 09/05/2016].

<sup>23</sup> Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia 1919, reproduced at [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/\\$File/13010\\_1901\\_1918%20section%204.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/E460415E64A5C941CA257AEF00178694/$File/13010_1901_1918%20section%204.pdf) [accessed 09/05/2016].

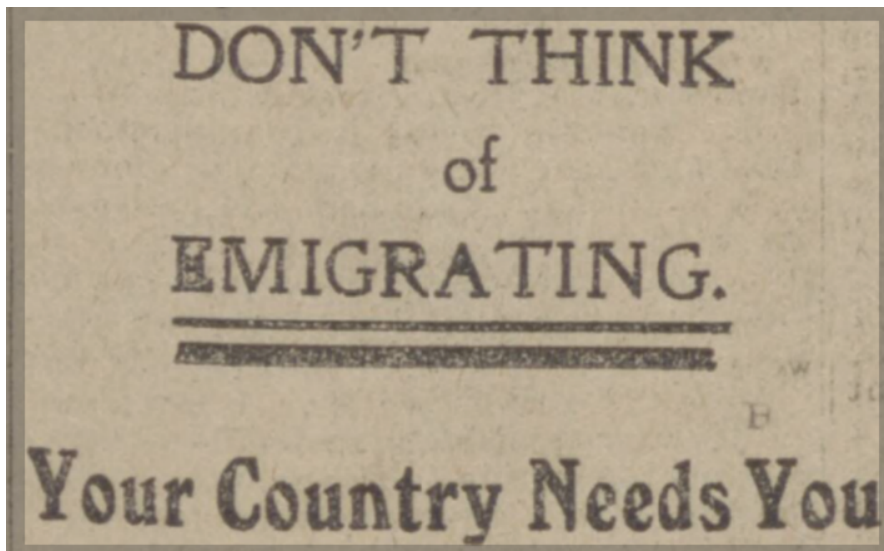


Figure 3.2 “Don’t Think of Emigrating” <sup>24</sup>

The above advertisement, placed on two consecutive days in the pages of the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* in November 1915, was explicit in its messaging and implicit in its intended recipients: men of military serving age. Pockets of trenchant anti-emigrationism grew within British society, particularly aimed at younger men, and concentrated before the introduction of the Military Service Act of January 1916, which introduced conscription. November 1915 saw an intense flurry of heightened anti-emigration activity, centred on Liverpool. The attempted migration of about 600 young men on board Cunard Line ship *Saxonia* was reported in the local press as having been met with hostile anti-emigration public crowds and a refusal to sail on the part of crew members.<sup>25</sup> Newspaper reporters, as illustrated in the news feature below, positioned the predominantly Irish male migrants as ‘shamefaced’. One of the leading protagonists in this anti-emigration fervour was Conservative and

<sup>24</sup> Text taken from an advertisement from the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 11 and 12 November 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000511%2f19151111%2f066> and <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000511%2f19151112%2f118> [accessed 12/05/2016].

<sup>25</sup> *Liverpool Echo*, 6 November 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0000271%2F19151106%2F065%2F0004&browse=true> [accessed 28/06/2018]. This activity was targeted at Irish emigrants, bringing in a political dimension, but not central to this study.

Unionist MP for Birkenhead Alfred Bigland, who exploited the incident with a public address shortly afterwards in Liverpool.<sup>26</sup>



Figure 3.3 “The Emigrant Scuttle”<sup>27</sup>

The Cunard Line, pressured to respond, issued a new policy whereby emigration bookings from British men of military service age were refused.<sup>28</sup> The White Star Line, Canadian Pacific Line and Anchor Line followed suit within days.<sup>29</sup> Equally under pressure to take a stance against emigration was the British government, whose response was to introduce a regulation requiring special permission to be granted to those of military age wanting to migrate.<sup>30</sup> The Colonial Office was also active in discouraging wartime migration, a position with which the dominion governments aligned themselves.<sup>31</sup> In January 1916, the British government introduced the

<sup>26</sup> Photograph, Mr Bigland, M.P., at the Anti-Emigration Meeting, *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo*, November 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 15/05/2016].

<sup>27</sup> *Liverpool Echo*, 6 November 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000271%2f19151106%2f106>> [accessed 28/06/2018].

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> ‘Emigrating Shirkers’, *Birmingham Mail* 9 November 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000644%2f19151109%2f085>> [accessed 15/05/2016].

<sup>30</sup> *Portsmouth Evening News*, 17 November 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000290%2f19151117%2f123>> [accessed 28/06/2018].

<sup>31</sup> Fedorowich, ‘British ex-servicemen’, p.46.

conscription of men between 18 and 40, largely removing from passenger manifests single young men, the cohort which had dominated the profile of migrants until the outbreak of war.<sup>32</sup> This reduction in male migration had the immediate effect of placing women as the leading group of migrants. As a wartime migrant group, however, they were largely overlooked. Once dominion destinations complied with British government policy of heavily discouraging the outward movement of men of military age, migration activity was deemed to be at an end, at least on the part of the Colonial Office.<sup>33</sup> However, female migration entered the official sphere of discussion when the question of reconstruction emerged, and became an important strand of government policy.<sup>34</sup>

### **Women, war, employment**

The rhetoric of women's work during the First World War is dominated by narratives of mass employment, with female labour replacing that of men sent to the conflict in Europe. There was indeed an estimated increase of about 24 per cent in female employment between 1914 and 1918.<sup>35</sup> Much of the current literature on women and the First World War focuses on their access to a diversity of occupations through the "home front", and how this afforded them a public acknowledgement and visibility, leading to the contested arena of to what extent this provided an appetite for gender equality initiatives after the war.<sup>36</sup> The following section revisits earlier work that

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<sup>32</sup> The period of the Great Migration was dominated by an exodus from Britain of young, single men. Baines states that, during the peak years of emigration from Britain in the 1880s, a 2:1 ratio of men to women existed. See Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, p.85.

<sup>33</sup> For further discussion see Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen', pp. 45-71.

<sup>34</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.14.

<sup>35</sup> Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain since 1840*, p.134.

<sup>36</sup> The term 'home front', referring to the supportive efforts on the part of communities in countries across Europe not engaged in military campaigns overseas, was first coined in 1914. See C. Hämmerle, O. Überegger and B. Bader Zaar, 'Introduction: Women's and Gender History of the First World War – Topics, Concepts, Perspectives' in C. Hämmerle, O. Überegger and B. Bader Zaar (eds), *Gender and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) pp.1015, p.2. See this chapter also for broader discussion around the home front.

probed, in more detail, the nuances and variations of the impact on women's war work in Britain that has not been built upon, and links it to outward migration, placing it usefully across a range of historiographies.

By 1914 one third of women were in paid employment, equating to 4.8 million women in England and Wales, and 590,000 in Scotland.<sup>37</sup> Domestic service accounted for the largest proportion of female employment in the UK.<sup>38</sup> Large numbers of women were also employed in textile-related industries, the 1911 census for England and Wales recording nearly 750 000 working in the sector.<sup>39</sup> In his 1914 work *La Formation de L'Anglaise Moderne*, Paul Deschamps provided a detailed contemporary study of the textiles industries of the West Riding of Yorkshire, possibly the most current analysis prior to the outbreak of war. Through his work Deschamps brought to public attention, in the UK and France, the importance of these industries, not only to the national economy, but also to women. Deschamps noted in his exhaustive observations that "The Leeds textile industries...employ a surplus of women – about 23 000 as against 12 000 men".<sup>40</sup> While women remained largely in traditional female occupations, the diversity of employment was increasing. By the outbreak of war in August 1914, women in England and Wales were engaged in many areas of manufacturing including paper, soap, silk and ceramics as well as the leading cotton and woollen industries. They worked as photographers,

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<sup>37</sup> S. Fleming, 'Spokeswoman for a movement' in E. Rathbone, *The Disinherited Family* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1986. First published London: Edward Arnold & Co. 1924), p.43; A Vision of Britain Through Time, reproduced at [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table\\_page.jsp?tab\\_id=EW1911GEN\\_M53&show=>](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=EW1911GEN_M53&show=>) and [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:Yg9JMMQgddkJ:www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC\\_P/6/S1911POP+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:Yg9JMMQgddkJ:www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/6/S1911POP+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk) [accessed 17/04/2016].

<sup>38</sup> Fleming, 'Spokeswoman', p.22.

<sup>39</sup> A Vision of Britain Through Time, reproduced at [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/census\\_page.jsp?yr=1911&show=DB](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/census_page.jsp?yr=1911&show=DB) [accessed 03/04/2016].

<sup>40</sup> A review of Deschamps' publication published in the *Yorkshire Post* on Wednesday March 11 1914, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 03/03/2016].

teachers and business clerks, as well as in various areas of government work.<sup>41</sup>

The outbreak of the First World War disrupted trade and industry. Thousands of women were caught up in the consequences, with an estimated 44.4 per cent of working women finding themselves unemployed during September 1914.<sup>42</sup> The cotton trade, for example, was immediately hit, affecting the livelihoods of many women who worked in the industry.<sup>43</sup> Women's employment patterns during the war presented a severe problem for those affected. "The industries which feel her strength and skill are often enough the first to feel the economic breakdown that war entails" ran a feature on female employment in *The Labour Woman*.<sup>44</sup> Areas with industries employing large numbers of women faced challenges, notably Lancashire and Yorkshire, where textile working was prevalent. Trade union representatives sought support from the War Emergency Workers' National Committee for those who faced issues:<sup>45</sup>

We have over 1000 women and girls in the mending department of our woollen textile mills and in the rug-making trade who are only working about 15 or 20 hours weekly.....Their ages are from 15 to 45 and hundreds are self supporting that is paying for their board and lodgings, many are widows even. The local fund is of very little use to them, we have relieved women with children according to our scale, but the single young women are in sore distress. Can you suggest something, what we could do...

<sup>41</sup> 1911 Census, England and Wales, iv. Occupations and Industries, reproduced at <[www.A Vision of Britain.org.uk](http://www.AVisionofBritain.org.uk)> [accessed 03/04/2016].

<sup>42</sup> Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.131.

<sup>43</sup> S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p.38.

<sup>44</sup> WNC/32/3/69 *The Labour Woman*, Volume II, No. 6, October 1914, page 256.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the War Emergency Workers' National Committee see G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.99-101.



the question of underemployment has been debated several times, yet no result...<sup>46</sup>

*The Labour Woman*, founded in 1913, was the Labour Party's magazine devoted to profiling and discussing pressing issues affecting working women. The editors quickly brought the question of female unemployment during the war to their readers' attention. Related issues such as training, especially in new trades, was reported on, with a close focus on the work of the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment, set up at the beginning of the First World War, partly to administer the Queen's Work for Women Fund. While financial support from the government compared favourably with other European countries, its inadequacy in some cases led *The Labour Woman* to spotlight the plight of "the wives of soldiers obliged to take work to eke out the insufficient separation allowance – and then told they do not need the allowance".<sup>47</sup>

As the war progressed and opportunities for women increased, there was an estimated increase of about 24 per cent in female employment.<sup>48</sup> Women previously employed in the Lancashire cotton industry, for example, found work in the munitions factories of Birmingham.<sup>49</sup> Part-time working, however, remained a problem for many.<sup>50</sup> Attempts to retain cotton mill operatives within the industry, despite a surplus, increased the likelihood of reduced hours, and reduced wages, for more women.<sup>51</sup> Within a few months of a register for war work being introduced in 1915, 50,000 women had

<sup>46</sup> WNC 32/3/46i Letter from Fred Wood, Huddersfield and District Associated Trades and Labour Council, to the Workers' National Committee, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1914.

<sup>47</sup> S. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p.22. Grayzel provides a comparative study of this period, using Britain, France and Germany as case studies; WNC/32/3/69 *The Labour Woman*, Volume III, No.7, November 1915, p.333.

<sup>48</sup> Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.134.

<sup>49</sup> *Birmingham Evening Despatch*, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

<sup>50</sup> G. Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain since 1840* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p.131.

<sup>51</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, Monday July 16<sup>th</sup> 1917, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

registered.<sup>52</sup> The third of the adult female population who were employed at the outbreak of war were now also competing with women who found themselves needing to work, to supplement income lost through the demands on men of military action, an issue raised by *The Labour Woman* in November 1915:

Unemployment is also affected by the large numbers of women who are forced into industry by the need to support their families in the absence of fathers, sons and husbands.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, the assimilation of women into traditionally male areas of employment was not straightforward. Entrenched resistance to women moving into traditionally male occupational roles existed on the part of employers and trade unions.<sup>54</sup> In extreme cases, resistance led to the removal of women from their jobs, such as at the Liverpool docks in March 1916.<sup>55</sup> The media coverage dedicated to this story also allowed an insight into the pressures faced by women during the war. One of the female dock workers had been left with six children to look after while her husband was fighting, another with her husband and three sons at war and a third who had had no communication with her husband since he had left for Europe.<sup>56</sup> There was also a strong strand of opposition amongst eugenicists who considered women working in traditional male industries as adverse to the health of the nation's mothers and prospective mothers, a stance that positioned women in a prime role of child-

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<sup>52</sup> Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.136.

<sup>53</sup> WNC 32/3/69 *The Labour Woman*, Vol III. No.7 November 1915, p.333.

<sup>54</sup> Holloway, *Women and Work* p.138-9.

<sup>55</sup> *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 16 March 1916, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f00%2f00000337%2f19160316%2f033>>[accessed 15/11/2018].

<sup>56</sup> During March 1916, regional newspapers gave much coverage to the resistance of the National Union of Dock Labourers to the employment of women at the Liverpool Docks. Fifty women lost their jobs as a result. In addition to Liverpool newspapers, the story was reported in Scotland, Bristol, Sunderland, Yorkshire and Newcastle. Various newspapers reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 03/03/2016].



bearing.<sup>57</sup> Most women's employment during the First World War came in the shape of clerical work, and not in traditional male industries.<sup>58</sup> Despite this, by April 1915, *The Labour Woman* reported that 40,000 women and 60,000 men registered with the Labour Exchange were still waiting for work, with an extra warning of the impact on female employees of part-time work.<sup>59</sup>

This dislodgement of jobs across a range of sectors on which women depended damaged personal economies across the country. For example, pottery workers in Stoke, along with other women, were not "allowed to register on the unemployed lists".<sup>60</sup> Dressmakers also felt the downturn in demand. Poignant, pleading letters were sent to the Workers' National Committee:

...I have now, been out of employment, one month, and have walked from place to place, in the West-End without any result, all of whom, being on short time and scarcity of work. I am now forty (sic) three years of age, and have been at dressmaking since age Thirteen have a widowed mother, age sixty-eight, been widow 4 years without any income I have one sister, at business on three-quarter time, which cannot be expected to pay rent, keep mother, myself and her own self out of her money. Is their (sic) any possibility of any assistance at the present time.<sup>61</sup>

By mid-1915 reports suggesting improved employment levels for women appeared. However, despite the news heading "No Unemployment", it was clear that recovery was localised, and that those occupations that had

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<sup>57</sup> This is a theme discussed throughout Braybon, *Women workers*.

<sup>58</sup> J. Greaves 'The First World War and its aftermath' in Carnevali, F and Strange J (eds), *Twentieth Century Britain: Economic, Cultural and Social Change* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), p.131.

<sup>59</sup> WNC 32/3/69 *The Labour Woman* Vol. II. No. 12 April 1915, p. 286.

<sup>60</sup> WNC 32/3/15. Letter from A.M. Lawton of the National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers to Margaret Bondfield, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914.

<sup>61</sup> WNC 32/3/31 I Letter to Workers' National Committee, 1914.

suffered most acutely at the outbreak of war were still in crisis, including the shirt and collar-making trades for which “a return to normal conditions” was not expected “for a long time”.<sup>62</sup> Even within certain industries, such as cotton manufacturing in Lancashire, there was a disparity in fortunes. Within the region, the specialised fine spinning area of Bolton was particularly affected, resulting in the closure of twelve mills, while the Oldham mills were able to mitigate serious disruption.<sup>63</sup>

Migration potentially offered a solution to the shortage of employment for women. Within weeks of war, the Board of Trade wrote to the War Emergency Workers’ National Committee to discuss a collaborative approach to resolving unemployment through overseas settlement:

I understand that the Workers National Committee have been in touch with various Agents General of the Dominions on the question of the emigration of certain numbers of women to relieve the existing unemployment. It has occurred to me that this is a matter in which we might perhaps be able to co-operate if your Committee wishes us to do so, and if therefore you are likely to be in this direction any day in the near future, I should be very glad to see you to discuss the matter if you could give me notice of the time and date of your visit.<sup>64</sup>

The relationship between women’s unemployment and overseas settlement was identified across agencies and organisations during the early years of war. The infrastructure that had facilitated the mass migration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remained responsive during the war,

<sup>62</sup> *Birmingham Evening Despatch*, June 23 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

<sup>63</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, July 16 1917, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

<sup>64</sup> WNC 32/3/27 Letter from W.M. Beveridge, Board of Trade Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance Department to Mr Henderson, Secretary, War Emergency Workers’ National Committee, 25 September 1914

those behind it adapting quickly to demands specific to the new environment of war and associated domestic dislocation. The previous period of migration had seen shipping companies and their agents, working in collaboration with organisations that specialised in female migration, create a well-honed machine that responded to both the demand for prospective wives for overseas settlers, for labour, often prior to a through-route to marriage, and through pressure to mitigate the surplus woman question. Women's migration during the war years continued to be pushed through this combined activity, placing British migrant women centrally as a leading market for passenger shipping, and contributing to the regendering of the British migrant profile.

### **The business of migration**

The next section explores further how the unemployment issue amongst women was seized upon by those with a vested interest in migration, and positioned as a rationale for sustaining overseas settlement. It deals with two aspects of migration: firstly, the role of the shipping business in providing available capacity for passengers within a wartime environment and secondly, the work of emigration promoters. The shipping industry was an established and powerful force in influencing policy and legislation, including that relating to migration, which had become a highly competitive arena by the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> The work of female emigration societies is well discussed elsewhere, as referenced in Chapter 1, and the purpose of this section is to understand how the BWEA adapted its activity to wartime conditions rather than revisit its development, how it worked and the individuals involved. It

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, T. Feys, *The Battle for the Migrants. The Introduction of steamshipping on the North Atlantic and its impact on the European Exodus* (St Johns Nfld: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2013) and T. Feys "Shipping Companies as Carriers and Barriers to Human Mobility. The Atlantic and Pacific Border Regimes of the United States" in *World History Connected* 11 (3) 2014, reproduced at [http://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiillinois.edu/11.3/forum\\_feys.html](http://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiillinois.edu/11.3/forum_feys.html) [accessed 12/10/2018].

focuses on two strands of the business interests that operated migration activity and that had become more established and sophisticated as the era of mass migration progressed during the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

The purpose of introducing this discussion is to add to the existing understanding of the migration business, but with specific reference to women in a wartime context, and to explore how these respective organisations and commercial operations responded to the threat to normal activity and leveraged opportunity from the position that many women faced, especially with regards to employment. I argue that the shipping industry with passenger travel at the heart of its business pursued its commercial operations within the constraints and impact of war, and that women were specifically targeted. With different yet aligned interests were the emigration promoters, such as the BWEA, who worked with shipping interests to protect its work in settling women overseas, using their status, for example unemployed or widowed, to build strategies around, while furthering its agenda of British imperialism.

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<sup>66</sup> For a more comprehensive assessment of the business side of emigration see Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.277-305. This includes discussion about government agents and booking agents, for example.

### “Special Care Taken of Women and Children Emigrants”



**Figure 3.4** “Special Care Taken of Women and Children Emigrants” <sup>67</sup>

A crucial factor in sustained migration activity was the availability of merchant shipping. This was severely affected by the onset of war, not least due to the requisition of vessels by the government, thereby reducing capacity amongst the shipping companies.<sup>68</sup> Shipping losses and the use of vessels for wartime activity, such as troopships and hospital ships, reduced opportunity for

<sup>67</sup> Advertisement for Canadian Pacific ships *Missanabie* and *Metagama*, *Western Mail*, April 22 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000104%2f19150422%2f187> [accessed 12/05/2016].

<sup>68</sup> Canadian Pacific was one of many shipping companies disrupted by wartime activity. G. Musk, *Canadian Pacific. The story of the famous shipping line* (Newton Abbot and London: David & Charles, 1981).

passenger travel, which was also vulnerable to enemy action. Canadian Pacific, for example, reduced passenger trade capacity after the requisitioning of vessels.<sup>69</sup> However, in response, the company dedicated newly-built vessels *Metagama* and *Missanabie* to the Atlantic passenger trade.<sup>70</sup>

The shipping industry attempted to retain as much normality to their services as possible, within the constraints of operating during a global conflict. Shipping companies not only maintained passenger services during the war, but also actively promoted them, through agents, particularly targeting the female migrant market. A listing in the *Nottingham Evening Post* in September 1915, for example, not only offered sailings for migrants to Canada, but also reduced fares for domestic servants wanting to move to Australia.<sup>71</sup> Newspapers in cities and towns across the country carried details of sailing schedules on a regular basis. At first glance, for example, the sailings list in the *Birmingham Daily Post* of February 1915 might easily suggest business as usual in terms of passenger trade. Advertised in the listings were services by Canadian Pacific and Cunard, amongst other companies, the only hint of abnormal conditions in the warning that all sailings were “liable to cancellation or deviation, without notice, owing to the war”.<sup>72</sup>

This pattern continued during the war, belying the loss and disruption to shipping during the conflict.<sup>73</sup> A further selection of advertising shows a sustained presence in regional newspapers during the conflict, posted in urban areas and port cities from where sailings departed, including Sheffield,

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<sup>69</sup> Musk, *Canadian Pacific*, pp.32-33.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp.32-33.

<sup>71</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 4 September 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000321%2f19150904%2f039> [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>72</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 February 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000033%2f19150211%2f024> [accessed 03/04/2016].

<sup>73</sup> Comprehensive biographies of shipping during the war and the fate of many vessels, reproduced at <http://www.theshipslist.com/> [accessed 28/08/2018].

Newcastle and Liverpool.<sup>74</sup> A closer study of the *Glasgow Daily Record* during the entire month of February 1917 shows shipping listings in every edition.<sup>75</sup> In February 1918, the *Liverpool Daily Post* promoted sailings to New Zealand and Australia on “magnificent mail steamers”, with no reference to war activity.<sup>76</sup> However, alongside these advertisements were the sobering reports of shipping losses, including those carrying large numbers of passengers such as Cunard liner *Lusitania*, which was torpedoed in May 1915.<sup>77</sup> The threat of torpedo attacks interrupted scheduled sailings, including that of the Sloggie sisters whose plans to migrate to Australia were vulnerable to wartime conditions. Eventually joining the P&O ship *Benalla* along with about 800 other emigrants in July 1915, the sisters had changed their plans due to the submarine threat to shipping.<sup>78</sup> The dangers of ocean travel, that became more apparent as the war progressed, also dissuaded people from travelling and were quoted as a leading consideration in the decline of emigration during the war, not least for widowed women.<sup>79</sup>

While shipping company advertisements that appeared in newspapers during the First World War acknowledged the extraordinary conditions of sailing, they also carefully targeted women travelling alone, and with children. A Canadian Pacific advertisement of January 1915 offered the assurance of

<sup>74</sup> Examples include those printed in the *Sheffield Independent*, 28 February 1916, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19160228%2f092>>; *Newcastle Journal*, 13 January 1917, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000569%2f19170113%2f171>>; *Glasgow Daily Record*, reproduced at <[https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1917-02-01&date\\_offsetdate=1917-02-28&newspaper=daily record&keywords=anchor line](https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1917-02-01&date_offsetdate=1917-02-28&newspaper=daily%20record&keywords=anchor%20line)> [all accessed 03/04/2016].

<sup>75</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19160228%2f092>> <[http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1917-02-01&date\\_offsetdate=1917-02-28&keywords=royal%20line](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers?date=1917-02-01&date_offsetdate=1917-02-28&keywords=royal%20line)> <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000649%2f19180201%2f013>> [accessed 03/04/2016].

<sup>76</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 8 May 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000648%2f19150508%2f118>> [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>77</sup> *Dundee People's Journal*, 24 July 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000698%2f19150724%2f176>> [accessed 28/08/2018]. The detail of the Sloggie sisters' migration exists due to a fire on board their ship, extensively reported in the British press.

<sup>78</sup> *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 3 July 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0000506%2F19150703%2F002%2F0005&browse=true>> [accessed 30/07/2018].



“special care taken of women and children emigrants”.<sup>80</sup> Similarly the Allan Line, on its sailings to Canada in 1915, offered “Matrons for unaccompanied young women”.<sup>81</sup> Canadian Pacific maintained regular sailings across the North Atlantic during the war with its ships *Metagama* and *Missanabie*, supplemented by other vessels as and when required.<sup>82</sup> The shipping company had a direct relationship with emigration organisation, the BWEA, placing adverts in its magazine *Imperial Colonist*, while the latter placed advance bookings for both ships.<sup>83</sup> This was one component in a network of collaboration within which the BWEA operated, and which, collectively, worked to ensure a level of female migration was sustained during the war, using the situation of women’s unemployment and economic need as a backdrop. The parallel agenda for organisations such as the BWEA was to meet their ambitions to position women, through migration, for white imperial consolidation.

The BWEA was one of the leading organisations dedicated to female emigration throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>84</sup> The sustained movement of women overseas during the war provided a platform on which the organisation could continue its work. The members of the BWEA were proactive, the link between employment opportunity and migration during the early stages of the war quickly seized upon. As early as September 1914, in a letter to the editor of the *Yorkshire Daily Post*, Grace Lefroy, Honorary Secretary of the BWEA, made clear the possible links between war-related unemployment and migration opportunities:

<sup>80</sup> *Sheffield Independent*, Wednesday 13 January 1915, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19150113%2f1> > [accessed 26/04/2016].

<sup>81</sup> *Fife Free Press and Kirkcaldy Guardian*, 30 January 1915, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001062%2f19150130%2f122> > [accessed 26/04/2016].

<sup>82</sup> Musk, *Canadian Pacific*, p.33.

<sup>83</sup> SOSBW GB 106 1sos.

<sup>84</sup> See Chilton, *Agents of Empire* for a comprehensive account of the work of the BWEA.



With so many young women and girls thrown out  
of work in consequence of the war, it is important  
that they should be advised to think of emigration.<sup>85</sup>

The letter continued in directing these women towards domestic and children's nursery work in, notably, "the British Colonies", a signal towards the BWEA's interest in empire settlement, specifically Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

While migration was positioned as a more practical response to female underemployment during wartime, still present were those characteristics that had defined the work of emigration promoters during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely the provision of labour on one hand and the extension of British marriage and motherhood across empire on the other.<sup>86</sup> This sat within a broader movement that evolved during the war, led by such empire settlement proponents as Sir Henry Rider Haggard, who spent a month in Australia during Spring 1916 advocating for the resettlement of British service personnel, thus keeping British migrants within the empire.<sup>87</sup>

### **Women's wartime migration and the route to empire settlement**

The daily operations of the BWEA during the war took on a fully pragmatic guise, reacting to situations at a very personal level. The council minutes of the BWEA detail individual cases of overseas settlement, including that of Miss E Steedon, travelling to a domestic service position in Ottawa on the ship *Missanabie* in October 1916, and Lily Ada Watling, who moved to Australia as a clerk later the same year.<sup>88</sup> However, the organisation remained rooted in its ideals of an empire populated by white British women whose

<sup>85</sup> Letter from Grace Lefroy to the Editor, published in the *Yorkshire Post*, September 16 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000687%2f19140916%2f061> [accessed 02/03/2016].

<sup>86</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, pp.9-10.

<sup>88</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos, Hon.Sec's Report to Council at the Meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1916.

profile was aligned to an imperialist ideal of how to preserve and strengthen empire.<sup>89</sup>

This was evident in media reports of recruitment efforts during the war, with commentary on the suitability of prospective migrants giving attention to their “healthy rosy cheeks” rather than occupational skills and experience.<sup>90</sup> The report, centred on a BWEA recruitment event in December 1914, offered no critique of the diminishing employment options available to the country’s female workforce, yet presented a perspective of the role of British female migration, charged with eugenicist thinking and the ideology of motherhood as an instrument of the imperial machine:

This girl is going with her friend and they are both nice-looking,  
healthy, refined girls, just the kind from which an Empire should  
be built.<sup>91</sup>

As empire settlement became an important component in the planning of postwar reconstruction, the profile of the BWEA led to an enhanced and more officially recognised role.<sup>92</sup> Alongside actual migration activity during the war, initiatives for female overseas settlement emerged in government policy, which became pivotal as government-led reconstruction planning progressed. Postwar planning coincided with the repositioning of the surplus woman question, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, was not without resistance. During 1917, the link between surplus women and migration was raised in a Royal Commission on Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of

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<sup>89</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.67.

<sup>90</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>91</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>92</sup> Fedorowich, ‘British ex-servicemen’, pp.45-71.

British dominions, and positioned as a central thread to evolving government policy.<sup>93</sup>

Planning included the introduction of training in skills required in recipient countries, spanning a range of nursing, farm-work and domestic services. Training schemes had been a part of female migration since at least the 1890s when a residential school for domestic duties was established at the Leaton Colonial Training Home in Shropshire.<sup>94</sup> In addition, Lady Guinness's Farm School at Woking in Surrey provided a range of agricultural courses, including dairying and gardening.<sup>95</sup> Training dovetailed into the wartime unemployment issues, making provision for courses in market gardening and fruit growing for out-of-work women, including typists and dressmakers.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 27 March 1917, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19170327%2f096> [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>94</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.227.

<sup>95</sup> The farm school at Woking was recommended in the Answers to Correspondents in *The Western Morning News*, June 16 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000329%2f19150616%2f050> [accessed 26/08/2018].

<sup>96</sup> *Reading Mercury*, 2 October 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000369%2f19151002%2f268> These initiatives were not exclusively intertwined with the pursuit of empire settlement, but the training was aligned with demand and opportunity in the British Dominions, a theme further discussed in Chapter 4.



Figure 3.5 “Training for a Life Overseas”<sup>97</sup>

During 1916, the BWEA worked alongside Princess Christian’s nursing schemes, specifically to meet demand for midwives in the Canadian Prairie Provinces.<sup>98</sup> Princess Christian had an established interest in empire settlement as President of the South African Colonisation Society. This society, founded in 1901, was instrumental in the combined efforts of organisations dedicated to women’s migration, during the war and with an eye on its role in postwar reconstruction, as outlined in a letter circulated to regional newspapers to promote their work.<sup>99</sup> Other partners of the BWEA in providing training was the children’s nurse training college Sesame House in London,

<sup>97</sup> *Sunday Mirror*, 24 October 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 03/03/2016].

<sup>98</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 4 November 1916, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000264%2f19161104%2f077>> [accessed 26/08/2018].

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Helena, Princess Christian, to the Editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, Monday December 11 1916. This letter raised the role of migration in postwar resettlement and was jointly signed by Helena, on behalf of the South African Colonisation Society; Rachel Dudley and Ellen Joyce of the BWEA and Caroline Grosvenor and Reta Oldham on behalf of the Colonial Intelligence League, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000687%2f19161211%2f066>> [accessed 02/03/2016].

which approached the BWEA in 1915 with regards to aligning their work to support emigration needs.<sup>100</sup>

The initiatives with which the BWEA engaged to support its activity included ones introduced specifically to mitigate the impact of war upon working women, notably the Queen's Work for Women Fund.<sup>101</sup> Advocating hard-to-profile overseas settlement amongst potential migrants, BWEA members visited the Queen's workrooms of Shepherd's Bush and Battersea during March 1915 to promote the assisted schemes.<sup>102</sup> They also worked to influence the type of training that women accessed, to align it more with the demands of the dominions. For example, in agreement with the Central Committee for Women's Employment, needlework was substituted for domestic economy in some of the workrooms.<sup>103</sup>

The BWEA's presence in newspaper columns was sustained through the autumn and winter of 1914, their messages shifting in response to the fluid demands of the British dominions. In October, it promoted reduced fares to Australia and New Zealand and by March 1915, "unemployed women" were assured of "definite work in Australia".<sup>104</sup> The turn in focus to settlement in Australia in late 1914 and early 1915 reflected the lack of appetite for British migration in Canada, made clear in the response to the letter quoted above, from the War Emergency Workers' National Committee to the Board of Trade:

...we have had letters from Canada from which it is perfectly

clear that there is considerable unemployment among women

<sup>100</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, December 1915.

<sup>101</sup> For further detail of the establishment and work of the latter, see Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.221

<sup>102</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, March 1915.

<sup>103</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, March 1915.

<sup>104</sup> This was advertised in the *Hull Daily Mail*, 15 October 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000324%2f19141015%2f065> and the *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 16 October 1914 <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000483%2f19141016%2f029>> [both accessed 22/08/2018]. 'Unemployed Women' letter was published in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 March 1915, <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000250%2f19150311%2f221>> [accessed 22/08/2018].

in that Dominion and that any further emigration from this side will only aggravate what is already a very serious problem.<sup>105</sup>

The BWEA's most active time coincided with the period of highest unemployment, in the immediate months after the outbreak of war in August 1914. The organisation sustained the promotion of emigration to Australia and New Zealand until spring 1915, but by 1916 their efforts at encouraging women to emigrate were refocused towards postwar resettlement. This was the beginning of their evolution into the Society for Overseas Settlement for British Women, discussed in the following chapter. A first step towards what was the creation, in 1917, of the Joint Council of Women's Emigration Societies, a partnership of the BWEA, the South African Colonisation Society and Colonial Intelligence League.<sup>106</sup>

Despite its range of collaboration, the BWEA's success rate in supporting women who wanted to emigrate was limited. During 1915, despite an ongoing presence in regional media and attendance at public meetings, the association supported the migration of only 267 women.<sup>107</sup> The Association reported difficulties in engaging young women in the opportunities available through their channels. Despite hundreds of enquiries a month, there seemed to be little appetite amongst women, even those wanting to move overseas, to engage with these formalised initiatives.<sup>108</sup> While the BWEA received hundreds of enquiries, rarely did these convert to actual sailings and annual emigration figures through the organisation, after 1915, did not reach beyond 200.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> WNC 32/3/28 Letter from Mr Henderson, War Emergency Workers' National Committee to W.M. Beveridge, Board of Trade Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance Department, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1914.

<sup>106</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.32.

<sup>107</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

Agencies such as the BWEA played their part, but, despite their profile, were not dominant in controlling the volume of migrants, nor had been in preceding decades, following a pattern of engagement set during the 1880s.<sup>110</sup> In February 1915, Aberdeen Line ship *Euripides*, sailing to Australia, carried BWEA matron Miss E Harrison who supervised a group of 25 domestic workers, 17 of whom were financed by the Queen's Work for Women Fund.<sup>111</sup> On the voyage, however, were 229 unaccompanied women, also young domestic workers, but travelling independently of an organised party.<sup>112</sup> The BWEA, in July 1916, conceded that "There is plenty of work at home at present for women of all classes".<sup>113</sup> Yet female emigration outside of the assisted schemes and organised parties continued. In June 1916, 229 women had travelled on board *Missanabie* to Canada while during the same month 36 had sailed with the BWEA.<sup>114</sup> This points towards more dominant factors in women's decision to migrate, not least the influence of personal networks, and while, as discussed in the next section, individuals were willing to utilise formal apparatus when required, most travelled within a framework of family and friends.

Much of the above discussion is centred on employment opportunities for women and how this connected with migration. However, there is also an aspect to resettlement that relates to identity and transnationalism and is worth consideration, especially in the context of the First World War. The example, through a biographical lens, of British migrant Laura Francatelli is useful in

<sup>110</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p. 226. Harper and Constantine estimate that between 1884 and 1914 the BWEA facilitated less than 10 per cent of female emigration.

<sup>111</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos.

<sup>112</sup> BT 27/863/1/1 Outward Passengers, SS *Euripides*, 5 February 1915, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 15/05/2016].

<sup>113</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos.

<sup>114</sup> BT 27/872/1 Outward Passengers *Missanabie* 3 June 1916, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 15/05/2016]; SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, July 1916.

revealing other environments within which women left Britain. Laura Francatelli features in Chapter 7 in relation to her association with the *Titanic* tragedy in 1912. For the purposes of this chapter, Francatelli is positioned as a wartime migrant to the USA in order to probe and discuss the circumstances of her departure from Britain.

Laura Mabel Francatelli was born in 1880 in Lambeth, London where she also grew up.<sup>115</sup> She was the granddaughter of celebrated chef Charles Elmé Francatelli, a tradition that her own father continued in his work.<sup>116</sup> By 1901, Laura's father was disabled through paralysis, and the family seemed to draw its household income through letting out rooms to actors, as none of the elder children, with the exception of one, was listed at this time as employed.<sup>117</sup> Over the subsequent decade, during which time her father died, Laura secured employment as a secretary to a court dressmaker (who was likely to be Lady Duff Gordon).<sup>118</sup> It was while working with Lady Duff Gordon that Laura Francatelli established a transnational pattern to her life, travelling between Britain, Europe and the USA. Both before and after her migration to the USA in July 1916, Laura's working life involved transatlantic travel. As well as being with her employer on the fated maiden voyage of *Titanic* in 1912, travelling from Cherbourg, Laura accompanied her on a number of other occasions to the USA, both before and after her marriage and her official

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<sup>115</sup> Births registered in April, May and June 1880. Laura Mabel Francatelli is listed as living in London on the census returns, 1891, 1901, 1911, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 11/05/2017].

<sup>116</sup> MMM.2003.221, Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool), Letter of provenance, Laura Francatelli's apron. Laura Mabel's father, Charles Elmé Francatelli, is listed as a cuisinière in the 1891 census, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 11/05/2017].

<sup>117</sup> 1901 England, Wales and Scotland census, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 09/02/2018].

<sup>118</sup> Charles Francatelli died 27 May 1901, Index to Death Duty Registers. Census of England and Wales 1911, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 09/02/2018]. Laura Francatelli was employed by Lady Duff Gordon, famed couturier 'Lucile', at the time of the *Titanic* disaster <[www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx)> [accessed 19/12/2018].



settlement there.<sup>119</sup> For example, in September 1916, shortly after the outbreak of the war, and not long before her permanent settlement in the USA, Laura travelled with her employer on the Cunard ship *Campania* from Liverpool to New York. This journey was repeated two years later.<sup>120</sup>

Laura married Swiss-born hotel and restaurant worker Max Alfred Haering in 1913, in London, and migrated to the USA three years later, placing her outside of empire settlement.<sup>121</sup> The couple's decision to migrate reflected their transatlantic work patterns. Like Laura, Max Haering also engaged in transatlantic travel. In 1911 he sailed from Southampton to New York, while he was working as a clerk at the Hotel Markin in Zurich, heading for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York, where he had a contact.<sup>122</sup> In 1917, Max Haering made a further voyage from Liverpool to New York.<sup>123</sup>

As a working, married migrant woman, with no children, and travelling internationally before, during and after the war, Laura Francatelli presents a profile that contrasts with many of the women who settled in empire destinations. There are also facets to her circumstances that provoke questions about her identity as a married migrant woman, and provide further possible reasons for her move to the USA. On her marriage, and in compliance with legislation at the time, Laura adopted her husband's Swiss nationality.<sup>124</sup>

Sailing from Liverpool to New York in October 1916, Laura is listed as a Swiss

<sup>119</sup> Laura Francatelli's status as a married, transnational working migrant is discussed further in Chapter 6. Laura's voyage on *Titanic* and subsequent survival after the tragedy is well-documented. See <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx> [accessed 11/02/2018].

<sup>120</sup> List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States, SS *Campania*, Liverpool to New York 26 September 1914 and SS *St Paul* from Liverpool to New York, Nov 4 1916, reproduced at <[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)> [accessed 11/02/2018].

<sup>121</sup> Marriages registered in July, August, and September 1913, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 11/02/2018].

<sup>122</sup> List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival, SS *Oceanic*, Southampton to New York 1 November 1911. The hotel and named friend are listed on this manifest.

<sup>123</sup> BT27/883 Passenger List, *St Paul*, Liverpool to New York, 15 December 1917, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA/BT27/0883/00/0118/P/0007F&parentid=TNA/BT27/0883000118/00106>> [accessed 11/10/2018].

<sup>124</sup> Women in Britain were legally obliged to adopt their husband's nationality on marriage. See Mrinalina Sinha "Nations in an Imperial Crucible" in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, pp. 181-202, p.198

national.<sup>125</sup> Officially, therefore, her identity converted into that of a non-British migrant, and while her decision to relocate to New York was likely driven by her husband's work and her own established connections, this additional factor may also have influenced a shift away from identifying with the "Britishness" that framed the Empire Settlement Act.<sup>126</sup> Laura eventually applied for US citizenship in 1933, a status she held until her death in 1967.<sup>127</sup>

A further aspect that may have impacted directly on the Haerings, possibly influencing their decision to move to the USA, relates to the environment of wartime London. As a Swiss-born Jewish man, Max Haering would have been acutely aware of the anti-Semitic and anti-German popular sentiment that was rife in localised pockets of the UK, especially in areas of London.<sup>128</sup> The married couple would have been exposed to anti-Semitic rhetoric in London newspapers and witnessed the anti-German riots after the sinking of Cunard ship *Lusitania* in May 1915, and while Swiss, Haering, as a

<sup>125</sup> BT 27 Passenger List, SS *Philadelphia*, Liverpool to New York, October 15 1916. Laura Mabel Haering is listed as a Swiss citizen, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 15/05/2016].

<sup>126</sup> I discuss the influence of husbands in the migration of married women in Chapter 5.

<sup>127</sup> Laura Mabel Haering Petition for Citizenship, United States of America, 10 January 1933, reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2280/31301\\_168244-00424?pid=1138053&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=3Darj285%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DLaura%2520Mabel%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3DHaering%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D1138053%26dbid%3D2280%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D2&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=arj285&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2280/31301_168244-00424?pid=1138053&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=3Darj285%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DLaura%2520Mabel%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DHaering%26gsln_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D1138053%26dbid%3D2280%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D2&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=arj285&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)> [accessed 11/02/2018]. *Department of State, Foreign Service of the United States of America, Report of the Death of an American Citizen, Laura Mabel Haering, June 7 1967*, reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1616/31093\\_170714-00016?pid=48982&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=3Darj285%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26rank%3D1%26usepubjs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DLaura%2520Mabel%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3DHaering%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drst%26msav%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26dbid%3D1616%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D48982%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=arj285&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1616/31093_170714-00016?pid=48982&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=3Darj285%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26rank%3D1%26usepubjs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DLaura%2520Mabel%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DHaering%26gsln_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drst%26msav%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26dbid%3D1616%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D48982%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=arj285&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)> [accessed 11/02/2018]. Laura actually returned to Britain in later life, where she died, although as a final signal to her adopted country, her cremated ashes were sent to the US.

<sup>128</sup> Max Haering is listed as Jewish Swiss on the *List or Manifest of Alien Passengers United States Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival* for the ship *Oceanic*, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1911, reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/7488/NYT715\\_1766-0040?pid=4008844004&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=3DApV10%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DGureh9cvxDbGImb2e57jw%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-c%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3Dalfred%2520max%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3DHaering%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1885%26gskw%3DJewish%26\\_83004003-n\\_xcl%3Df%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3D40%26h%3D4008844004%26recoff%3D8%25209%26dbid%3D7488%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D10&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=ApV10%26\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/7488/NYT715_1766-0040?pid=4008844004&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=3DApV10%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DGureh9cvxDbGImb2e57jw%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-c%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3Dalfred%2520max%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DHaering%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1885%26gskw%3DJewish%26_83004003-n_xcl%3Df%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3D40%26h%3D4008844004%26recoff%3D8%25209%26dbid%3D7488%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D10&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ApV10%26_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)> [accessed 10/10/2018]. For detail about anti-Semitic and anti-German rhetoric see G. Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) pp.10-11.

German-sounding name, might readily have provoked hostility.<sup>129</sup> Here was an aggressive manifestation of intolerance towards alien immigrants, intersecting with the identification of people of German descent as an enemy. On a broader level, anti-alienism was “one strand in the weaving of a British national identity”, presenting a set of values that would later frame the Empire Settlement Act.<sup>130</sup> While anti-alien and anti-Semitic activity was heightened during the war, and incidents such as the 1915 riots prompted government legislation enabling the internment of enemy aliens, what the Haerings were faced with was a national psyche that positioned “Other” in direct opposition to “Britain and Englishness”, locating them away from the profile of empire settlers and turning them towards the USA where they might play out the complexities of their individual and shared identities without the straightjacket of British imperialism.<sup>131</sup>

### **Wives, widows, workers**

The preceding section introduced the mechanisms within which migration was sustained during the war. In this section I discuss how individual migrant women responded to opportunities to move overseas, and explore the personal scenarios that influenced their decisions, with particular reference to occupational diversity. I also consider those characteristics of British female migration that prevailed into the war years and continued trends from preceding decades, while also identifying emerging characteristics specific to wartime. In addition, and to continue the theme of the previous section, I discuss how widows in particular were positioned as targets for migration, and

<sup>129</sup> Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, pp.9-11

<sup>130</sup> D. Cesarini and T. Kushner, *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1993) p. 29. Cesarini and Kushner discuss the emergence of anti-Semitism and anti-alienism in detail, including early twentieth-century legislation that deterred Jewish people from entering Britain, pp.31-32.

<sup>131</sup> Cesarini and Kushner, *Internment of Aliens*, pp 35-36 for detail of internment legislation and discussion of national identity and anti-alienism.

the role of the Salvation Army in facilitating their movement overseas, which also involved their status being absorbed into the category of surplus women.

Those women travelling unaccompanied with children were a continuum of individual family groups who had moved to areas such as the prairie lands of Canada, continuing a long-established pattern of settlement.<sup>132</sup> Migration also included patterns which saw men travel in advance of their families, which continued through the war and into the interwar years, leading to a profile of unaccompanied women travelling with children.<sup>133</sup> Similar patterns existed for migration to Australia and continued into the war. For example, housewife Agnes Jamieson migrated to Australia in April 1915 on P & O ship *Osterley*, travelling with her five children.<sup>134</sup> Living in Radnorshire in Wales at the time of the 1911 census, the family were moving to be with Agnes's husband John, an estate woodman who had emigrated a year earlier, prior to the outbreak of war.<sup>135</sup>

Families such as the Jamiesons formed a last wave of emigration before the impact of war reset trends. The passenger list of the ship *Osterley* referred to above shows that many other unaccompanied housewives and their children sailed with Agnes Jamieson on this voyage, almost all of whom were migrating to Australia and who formed the majority of those travelling.<sup>136</sup> The overall passenger profile on Agnes Jamieson's voyage hints at a shift towards

<sup>132</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.15.

<sup>133</sup> Harper, 'Peopling of the Empire', p.82.

<sup>134</sup> BT 27/866 Passenger list for ship *Osterley*, London to Australia, 9 April 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2ft27%2f0866%2f00%2f0037%2fp%2f0010f&parentid=tna%2ft27%2f0866000037%2f00219> [accessed 22/05/2016].

<sup>135</sup> Census 1911, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbc%2f1911%2frg14%2f33687%2f0111&parentid=gbc%2f1911%2frg14%2f33687%2f0111%2f1> [accessed 22/05/2016]. BT 27/845/1 Passenger list for ship *Orvieto*, 13 March 1914, reproduced at

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2ft27%2f0845%2f00%2f0062%2fp%2f0009f&parentid=tna%2ft27%2f0845000062%2f00222> [accessed 22/05/2016].

<sup>136</sup> BT27/866 Passenger list for ship *Osterley*, London to Australia, 9 April 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2ft27%2f0866%2f00%2f0037%2fp%2f0010f&parentid=tna%2ft27%2f0866000037%2f00219> [accessed 18/07/2018].

women becoming the dominant cohort of migrants.<sup>137</sup> Married women travelling alone, or with children, remained characteristic of outward migration, and yet their personal circumstances became shaped by war. This included women, newly-married to overseas servicemen and sailing to joining their husbands, and widows, a group around which emigration promoters framed part of their wartime policy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, marriage had long been established as a driver for female emigration, both to relieve the surplus population of women in Britain, and to provide partners for the excess of British men who had settled overseas. The presence of overseas servicemen during the war introduced an additional dynamic to migration activity, with the BWEA and its partners taking on the role of ensuring young women joined fiancés and husbands who had been repatriated. For those choosing marriage, the BWEA worked to ensure British women were able to join their partners overseas, in some cases supporting their migration while husbands and fiancés remained in Europe. Amongst 77 women who travelled through arrangement with the BWEA in the late summer of 1916 were wives of those in the Canadian forces.<sup>138</sup>

Some women for whom the war had opened up employment opportunities viewed marriage as a preferred alternative to narrowing career choices during wartime Britain. Illustrative of this were remarks made at a conference of the Joint Council of Women's Emigration Societies in June 1918 about the many WAACs (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps) who were

<sup>137</sup> On this voyage there were British passengers including 56 married couples, 114 unaccompanied men and 175 unaccompanied women. BT 27/860 Passenger list for ship *Osterley*, London to Australia, 9 April 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0866%2f00%2f0037%2fp%2f0026f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0866000037%2f00219>><https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0866%2f00%2f0037%2fp%2f0026f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0866000037%2f00219>> [accessed 18/07/2018].

<sup>138</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, October 1916.

“smitten with the charms of our stalwart soldiers of the Empire and hopelessly disgusted with the lack of charm in domestic service in Britain”.<sup>139</sup> A slightly glib summary revealed a serious issue about the diminishing diversity of women’s employment, and yet one which remained largely unchallenged. The efforts of the BWEA during the early years of conflict included placing young out-of-work professional women into overseas domestic service with little comment on this sacrifice of skills. The reality of their narrowing opportunities were embedded in the columns of the regional press, which carried feature straplines such as ‘Typists and Shop Girls for Australia’.<sup>140</sup> However, these young women demonstrated pragmatism when faced with limited options, with one bodice-maker’s assistant who had been unemployed for five months accepting that “It’s best for me to go...for they say dressmaking won’t be any good for a long time to come”.<sup>141</sup>

The BWEA played its role in sustaining outward movement trends amongst women. The profile of women who did travel with the BWEA included wives and fiancées travelling to join their partners, domestic workers travelling with their employer or to an assured situation, or nurses and teachers who had connections through which they were able to secure a position, of which there were few.<sup>142</sup> The BWEA advertised subsidised schemes designed for widows through promotional leaflets, and yet seemingly with little success.<sup>143</sup> As with all assisted migration, criteria largely dictated by the demands of the recipient country were applied. For example, during 1915, for widowed women seeking

<sup>139</sup> *The People*, June 16 1918, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000729%2f19180616%2f090>> [accessed 30/07/2018].

<sup>140</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173>> [accessed 02/03/2015].

<sup>141</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173>> [accessed 22/08/2018].

<sup>142</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos, Committee Minutes of the British Women’s Emigration Association, 1915.

<sup>143</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women’s Emigration Association, January 1915.

to relocate to Victoria and New South Wales in Australia, the age limit was 35, and two assisted children were supported, while widows without children were accepted into Queensland until the age of 45.<sup>144</sup>

Widows do appear on passenger manifests, but relatively infrequently. A search against all outward passengers leaving the UK during 1918 returns only 33 “widows”.<sup>145</sup> There are, however, occasions in which women continued to describe their role as “housewife” after the death of their husband, rather than identify themselves as widows. For example, Lavinia Lazenby, emigrating as a widow with children on *City of Karachi* in April 1918, describes herself as a housewife.<sup>146</sup> Her husband, Robert Thomas Lazenby, had died in December 1917.<sup>147</sup> In 1920, another of Lavinia Lazenby’s daughters, Hilda, became one of the many young single women to relocate to Australia and secure a job as a housemaid, continuing the well-anchored tradition of chain migration within families and across decades.<sup>148</sup>

However, widows remained a target for other emigration agencies, notably the Salvation Army, which arranged the departure of 1,769 to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa between 1916 and 1923.<sup>149</sup> The War Widows migration scheme formed one of the Salvation Army’s leading

<sup>144</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, March 10 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000648%2f19150310%2f219> [accessed 31/07/2018].

<sup>145</sup> For search results see [http://search.findmypast.co.uk/results/united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration?eventyear=1918&eventyear\\_offset=0&keywords=widow](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/results/united-kingdom-records-in-travel-and-migration?eventyear=1918&eventyear_offset=0&keywords=widow) [accessed 15/03/2016].

<sup>146</sup> Passenger List, *City of Karachi*, Plymouth to Australia, 24 August 1918, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0889%2f00%2f0054%2fp%2f0001f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0889000054%2f00012> [accessed 26/07/2018].

<sup>147</sup> England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index 1916-2007, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/7579/ons\\_d19174az-0539?pid=18111296&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc%3Daj1%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Drobert%2520thomas%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsIn%3Dlazenby%26gsIn\\_x%3D0%26msbdy\\_x%3D1%26msbdp%3D1%26msbdy%3D1869%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D18111296%26dbid%3D7579%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D3&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=arj1&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/7579/ons_d19174az-0539?pid=18111296&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3Daj1%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Drobert%2520thomas%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsIn%3Dlazenby%26gsIn_x%3D0%26msbdy_x%3D1%26msbdp%3D1%26msbdy%3D1869%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D18111296%26dbid%3D7579%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D3&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=arj1&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)

<sup>148</sup> BT27/923 Passenger List, *Ormonde*, London to Australia, 20 March 1920, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0923%2f00%2f0074%2fp%2f0019f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0923000074%2f00825> [accessed 26/07/2018].

<sup>149</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.229.



activities during the war.<sup>150</sup> Alongside its tenet of Christian evangelism, the Salvation Army positioned their migration scheme centrally within an imperialist agenda. “It is helping to build and cement the empire,” the Army’s Colonel Booth declared, not least as a way to divert criticism that fundraising efforts were not going directly to the war effort.<sup>151</sup> Wartime migration fitted into the Salvation Army’s wider activity embodied in its “In Darkest England” project that began in the late nineteenth century and positioned the organisation as the most dominant actor on the stage of philanthropic overseas settlement initiatives.<sup>152</sup>

Neither did widows escape from the surplus label during this wartime push for targeted female migration. The Salvation Army, while actively promoting emigration, positioned its schemes as a way “to help our “surplus” women”.<sup>153</sup> Women targeted under these schemes were positioned emotively in the popular press as “The Unloved”.<sup>154</sup>



**Figure 3.6** “The Unloved and the War Widow”<sup>155</sup>

<sup>150</sup> A. Shaw Clifton, ‘The Salvation Army’s Actions and Attitudes in Wartime: 1899-1945’, (unpublished PhD. King’s College, University of London, 1989), pp.177-178.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, pp.179-180.

<sup>152</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.283.

<sup>153</sup> *Daily Mirror*, August 19, 1916, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000560%2f19160819%2f041> [accessed 02/12/2018].

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.



The promotional brochure used to launch the scheme in Spring 1916 positioned war widows firmly in the framework of surplus women on the one hand, and British imperialism on the other. The imbalance in the population in Britain, exacerbated by the war, was seemingly resulting in a “tragic excess” of women.<sup>156</sup> The brochure also contained emotionally-charged language to generate interest in the newly-launched initiative, while directing attention towards empire settlement:

In the beginning of their widowhood, when the sympathy of their friends is at flood and the old associations are the dearest, it may be that some Widows would not take kindly to the idea of emigration. But the tide of human sympathy ebbs quickly...then the call to the Dominions, or any place where a living can be earned, has its surest appeal.<sup>157</sup>

The scheme propaganda was loaded with further imperial rhetoric, aligning casualties of war with sacrifice amongst men “who cherished the Empire ideal so highly that they gave everything up for it” and that those widows selected to migrate “would be representative of the best elements of British citizenship”.<sup>158</sup> This positioning constituted an additional component in the shift, during the war, towards situating the British dominions as the destination of choice for migrants, while also sitting within a broader family of imperial propaganda that, during wartime especially, served to anchor British nationalism and assumed superiority.<sup>159</sup>

Migration, assisted and independent, did hold appeal to some widows, including those who had lost husbands outside of military action, whether prior

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<sup>156</sup> WNC 15/5/40 *A Scheme to provide for the transference of Widows, with their families, from the British Isles to the King's Dominions Overseas*. Salvation Army, January 1916.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.7.

to or during the war. These women were ineligible for government payouts, and migration, especially for those with children of working age, offered the potential of family work.<sup>160</sup> Higman has located numerous advertisements from Australian newspapers from the interwar period that signal this cross-generational aspect of domestic work, including situations sought by mothers and daughters and aunts and nieces, with the mention of widowhood also a common feature.<sup>161</sup>

The enticement of a free passage overseas did little to incentivise these bereaved women, who, on a practical financial level, benefitted from relatively generous pension arrangements at home.<sup>162</sup> Migration was only likely to be viable to widows if it ameliorated their economic situation, as they were traditionally a group in society less likely to remarry and more likely to depend on close family networks, especially if they had children.<sup>163</sup> The dangers of sea travel as well as a heightened sense of patriotism were also considered to be disincentives to migration amongst widowed women.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, the perception of widows needing intervention from public or quasi-public bodies cast families on whom they depended in a negative light, especially amongst the urban middle class and upper-working class, and support from emigration promoters fitted well into such a category.<sup>165</sup>

Patterns of migration amongst widowed women, especially across families, did not always fit into the mechanics of organised schemes, and often

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<sup>160</sup> Widows of civilians did not receive government pensions until 1925 onwards. See S. Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.139.

<sup>161</sup> Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>162</sup> K. Holden, 'Imaginary Widows: Spinsters, marriage, and the "Lost Generation" in Britain after the great war', *Journal of Family History* 30:4 (2005), p.400.

<sup>163</sup> I. Blom, 'The History of Widowhood: A bibliographic overview' in *Journal of Family History* Vol 16 (2) 1991, p.197.

<sup>164</sup> *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 3 July 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0000506%2F19150703%2F002%2F0005&browse=true> [accessed 30/07/2018].

<sup>165</sup> Blom, 'Widowhood', p. 201.

took on a hybrid form, shaped by the needs of those relocating. Amongst the passengers of *Osterley* during 1915 appears the widowed Flora Prudence, who sailed on the 9 April voyage alone.<sup>166</sup> A week later, her 17 year-old daughter, also Flora Prudence, followed, pursuing domestic work in Australia.<sup>167</sup> The daughter Flora travelled as part of an organised group of young women. However, this domestic scenario was not one created by war. The Prudence family had previously lived in Liverpool, Flora being listed in the 1911 Census as assisting her husband Benjamin in the family business.<sup>168</sup> Benjamin Prudence died in 1911, four years before Flora and her daughter emigrated.<sup>169</sup> Towards the end of the war, the passenger manifest of *City of Karachi*, travelling from Plymouth to Sydney in April 1918, was dominated by English housewives, amongst which were a number of widows.<sup>170</sup> This included 44 year-old widow Lavinia Lazenby, mentioned above, who was accompanied by her four sons.<sup>171</sup> On the same voyage in 1918 was Emma Russell, travelling with her two daughters and son to New Zealand, having been widowed by the time of the 1911 census.<sup>172</sup> For these women, the war provided an opportunity for migration, facilitated by such organisations as the BWEA, while also keeping intact the family unit, important in the dynamic of

<sup>166</sup> BT27/866 Passenger list for ship *Osterley*, London to Australia, 9 April 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0866%2f00%2f0037%2fp%2f0009f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0866000037%2f00189> [accessed 18/07/2018].

<sup>167</sup> BT27/866/13 Passenger list for ship *Demosthenes*, London to Australia, 17 April 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA/BT27/0866/00/0038/P/0009F&parentid=TNA/BT27/0866000038/00358> [accessed 18/07/2018].

<sup>168</sup> 1911 Census, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbc%2f1911%2fqr14%2f22656%2f0693&parentid=gbc%2f1911%2fqr14%2f22656%2f0693%2f2> [accessed 18/07/2018].

<sup>169</sup> England and Wales Deaths 1837-2007, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=bmd%2fd%2f1911%2f3%2faz%2f000713&parentid=bmd%2fd%2f1911%2f3%2faz%2f000713%2f150> [accessed 18/07/2018].

<sup>170</sup> Passenger List, City of Karachi, Plymouth to Australia, 24 August 1918, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0889%2f00%2f0054%2fp%2f0001f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0889000054%2f00012> [accessed 26/07/2018].

<sup>171</sup> Passenger List, City of Karachi, Plymouth to Australia, 24 August 1918, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0889%2f00%2f0054%2fp%2f0001f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0889000054%2f00012> [accessed 26/07/2018].

<sup>172</sup> *Western Daily Express*, 20 June 1914, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000264%2f19140620%2f049>

widowhood.<sup>173</sup>

Single women, seeking work opportunities overseas, had long been a feature of female migration.<sup>174</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the provision of much-needed domestic support in Canada and Australia was positioned as a solution to the surplus woman question throughout the nineteenth century. Overseas occupations had, in part, been carefully framed to appeal to middle-class women, with terminology such as “companion helps”, “ladies’ helps” and “home helps”.<sup>175</sup> Support for assisted passages for domestic workers to destinations such as Australia was not a new initiative, having found sporadic favour amongst the emerging state governments during the nineteenth century, and peaking in the immediate prewar era.<sup>176</sup> The increasing numbers of young, unskilled city-dwellers had formed a new profile of migrants during the nineteenth century.<sup>177</sup> This, coupled with an increasing volume of British female migration, led to many young women forming a significant part of the migrant profile.<sup>178</sup> The First World War period saw women across social class underemployed, from textile workers to typists and accountants.<sup>179</sup>

In December 1914, the BWEA hosted a tea party in London to promote opportunities subsidised by the Queen’s Work For Women Fund, which attracted over 100 young women.<sup>180</sup> This event was a promotional strategy for

<sup>173</sup> Blom discusses the relationship between a widow and her children and the importance of the family unit, especially prior to access to welfare. Blom, ‘Widowhood’.

<sup>174</sup> For example, between 1867 and the 1930s, approximately 250,000 women, most of whom were British, travelled to Canada seeking domestic work. See Harper, ‘Rhetoric and Reality’, p.173.

<sup>175</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.66.

<sup>176</sup> Higman, *Domestic Service*, p.83-86.

<sup>177</sup> Harper, ‘Peopling of the Empire’, p.85.

<sup>178</sup> Constantine, ‘Migrants and Settlers’, p.166. Constantine notes that this growth varied yearly, and between source countries within the UK.

<sup>179</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 02/03/2015].

<sup>180</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 02/03/2015].

the BWEA that sat alongside lectures and pamphlets.<sup>181</sup> Amongst the group were typists, accountants, dressmakers, shop workers, factory workers, confectioners, glove-makers and cashiers, all considering a move to the domestic service sector in Australia, a change seemingly preferable to job uncertainty and unemployment. The question over the British domestic service sector is discussed further in the following chapter, but it is worth acknowledging that this trend, while following a pattern formed over decades, assumed a distinctive characteristic that became apparent during the war. This was defined by the marginalisation of migrant women with diverse skills and occupations into the traditional service industry, which became starkly apparent when mass unemployment hit from late 1914 onwards. Flora Prudence, referred to above, sailed with numerous other young women destined for domestic service. Part of an organised group, and accompanied by a matron in charge, the women's listed professions as domestics likely obscures the diversity of skills held collectively.<sup>182</sup> A week earlier, Flora's mother, Mrs Flora Prudence, had sailed on a voyage that included dressmakers, tailoresses, weavers, cooks, milliners, machinists and storekeepers, indicating the range of occupations amongst the female migrants, while also exposing those industries affected most by job shortages.<sup>183</sup>

For many British women, seeking domestic work in Australia was a through-route to marriage and home management, and an occupation few

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<sup>181</sup> For BWEA promotional strategies in the context of their broader activity see Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.282.

<sup>182</sup> BT27/866/13 Passenger list for ship *Demosthenes*, London to Australia, 17 April 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0866%2f00%2f0038%2fp%2f0009f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0866000038%2f00358> [accessed 19/07/2018].

<sup>183</sup> BT27/866 Passenger list for ship *Osterley*, London to Australia, 9 April 1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f0866%2f00%2f0037%2fp%2f0009f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f0866000037%2f00189> [accessed 18/07/2018].

stayed in for very long.<sup>184</sup> For some, once out of the contractual obligation that was part of assisted migration, domestic service might also be an entry point to greater independence and broader career choices in a new society.<sup>185</sup> For those young women who sailed overseas, their decision was made in light of immediate employment need.<sup>186</sup> As one young woman articulated for many, paid domestic work was a natural progression from household work with which they were very familiar, and came easier than office work:

I'm sick to death of business...and I know all about housework:

I'm the oldest girl of 11 and I was always a kind of 'mother' to

the others. But I'd rather go into service there than here...<sup>187</sup>

**"I'll go if she'll go"<sup>188</sup>**

Overseas movement during the war years fitted into a broader continuum of personal networked activity, presenting characteristics of kinship and community networks evident during the nineteenth century.<sup>189</sup> As migration increased over the course of the nineteenth century, communication between migrants and relatives back home that began at family level developed into links between communities.<sup>190</sup> These transnational familial networks were progressed through the advancement of technology, demonstrated by an increasingly efficient postal service, and the development of telecommunications.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Higman, *Domestic Service*, p.260

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, p.260. In the following chapter I discuss in more detail to what extent this applied to British migrant women during the 1920s.

<sup>186</sup> *Western Mail*, May 24 1915, reproduced at

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000104%2f19150524%2f123> [accessed 30/07/2018].

<sup>187</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 02/03/2015].

<sup>188</sup> *Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer* 3 December 1914, reproduced at

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000687%2f19141203%2f085> [accessed 10/05/2016].

<sup>189</sup> For details of the mechanics of nineteenth-century migration see Harper, 'Peopling of the Empire', pp.75-86.

<sup>190</sup> Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy*, p.28.

<sup>191</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.191.

The influence of family and friends in arriving at a decision to migrate, and the movement of family units across short periods of time prevailed during the wartime era. Most women who left Britain during the war did so unassisted, and for those who did utilise the support of organisations such as the BWEA, family networks and influences were present, as in the reunion between overseas service personnel and their wives and fiancées. In June 1916, BWEA matron Miss Rintoul chaperoned a group sailing to Canada, almost all of whom were going to join relatives and who had arranged employment independently.<sup>192</sup> While the BWEA attracted only a small proportion of women emigrating during the war into their organised parties, their records do reveal the significance of familial ties and existing networks. During the summer of 1915, amongst the women the BWEA emigrated, was a soldier's widow and her young son, engaged to accompany a young woman travelling to Australia to be married. There was also a Miss Green, who had obtained nursing qualifications and was moving to Australia to be with her brother, with the ambition of pursuing her profession.<sup>193</sup> It was these ties that also allowed most women to travel independently of groups such as the BWEA, knowing they were heading to a secure environment.

For those who did not have relatives settled overseas, the influence of friends and work colleagues in persuading young women to migrate was important. In the early years of the twentieth century, the Australian Immigration and Tourist Bureau identified that prospective migrants were swayed by friends with already established positions, an emerging

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<sup>192</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, July 1916.

<sup>193</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos Committee Minutes of the British Women's Emigration Association, October 1915.

phenomenon amongst British female domestic workers.<sup>194</sup> These characteristics did not change through wartime, although in the enthusiasm to continue migration as an imperial exercise which also alleviated acute female unemployment, this was also seen as a deterrent to migration. In a report about a promotional event supported by the Queen's Work for Women Fund to profile female emigration to Australia, one British newspaper report bemoaned "... one girl, generally kept another back. "I'll go if she'll go", was the usual remark".<sup>195</sup> For young women considering migration during the war, their family environment continued to be a significant factor, whether it was "the mothers who stood in the way", the "father who doesn't mind" or the father who "is so cruel, that's why mother wants us to go away".<sup>196</sup>

The pattern of siblings travelling together during the war, without parents, is also evident. The Sloggie sisters are one example, and the Schofield family another. The Sloggie sisters from Dundee migrated to Australia on board the P&O ship *Benalla* to take up work as domestics.<sup>197</sup> More is known about Lizzie and Mina Sloggie because they were caught up in a fire on board ship, an incident reported in their local press. The sisters were tailoresses in the textiles area of Dundee that had been affected by the flattening of domestic economies during the war. The resulting make-do-and-mend approach meant that the demand for personal tailoring and dressmaking fell.<sup>198</sup> Theirs is also further evidence of young women sacrificing trades in

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<sup>194</sup> Higman, *Domestic Service*, p.91.

<sup>195</sup> *Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer*, 3 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000687%2f19141203%2f085> [accessed 10/05/2016].

<sup>196</sup> *Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer*, 3 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000687%2f19141203%2f085> [accessed 10/05/2016] and the *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 02/03/2015].

<sup>197</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 23 July 1915, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 14/05/2016].

<sup>198</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers*, pp.44-45.



which they had developed skills to pursue opportunities in the domestic service sector that were made available to them.



Figure 3.7 Lizzie and Mina Sloggie <sup>199</sup>

Another example of migration that serves to highlight continuing trends is that of the Schofield family. In 1911 the Schofield family were living in Basingstoke, Hampshire. The family was seemingly comfortable, the father a coal and oil merchant and the elder children all in trades, including daughters Gertrude and Clara, a draper and milliner respectively.<sup>200</sup> In January 1915 four younger siblings, two girls and two boys aged between 15 and 20, sailed on the ship *Benalla* to Australia, the sons to pursue farming and the girls, domestic work. This coincided with some of the highest unemployment rates for women and a downturn in the trades in which the elder sisters were employed, and which were also likely to be those to which the younger

<sup>199</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 23 July 1915, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 14/05/2016].

<sup>200</sup> 1911 Census, reproduced at <<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbc%2f1911%2frg14%2f06276%2f0391%2f1>>

daughters, Enid and Doris, would have turned.<sup>201</sup> In 1926, Harriet Schofield followed her children to Australia, with “home duties” recorded as her occupation in the passenger list of ship *Moreton Bay*.<sup>202</sup> She was possibly moving to become housekeeper to one of her children after the death of her husband, John, continuing a pattern of chain migration amongst families, established during the nineteenth century that straddled the First World War and extended into the interwar years.<sup>203</sup>

These family histories demonstrate how migration interplayed with circumstances and events. The Sloggie sisters, seeking better opportunities than could be found in wartime Britain, travelled to join an older sibling who had migrated to Australia at an earlier stage with her husband.<sup>204</sup> The migration of the Schofield family stretches over a decade. While the impact of the First World War was the trigger for much migration amongst related individuals, this sat within activity that extended across time periods and generations, that also reflected established trends stretching back into the previous century.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced the little-discussed phase of First World War migration from Britain, situating it as a specific strand of gendered historiography, both in terms of overseas settlement, but also of the war itself.

In the context of the preceding period of emigration, during which time millions

<sup>201</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.44.

<sup>202</sup> BT 27/1131/2/1 Passenger List, *Moreton Bay*, 19 October 1926, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f1131%2f00%2f0055%2fp%2f0003f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f1131000055%2f00108>

Harriet Schofield's last address is recorded as 38 New Road, Basingstoke, Herts. The 1901 Census records show that the family had lived in Basingstoke since at least 1889 when her first child was born. It is therefore highly probable that this is the mother of the four siblings who emigrated in 1915.

<sup>203</sup> BT/Deaths, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>204</sup> *Dundee People's Journal*, 24 July 1915, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000698%2f19150724%2f176> [accessed 28/08/2018].

of people left Britain, the migration figures during the war seem insignificant in statistical terms. The majority of women in Britain navigated their lives, and those of their families, through the war, with household incomes relatively stable, many benefitting from access to increased wages.<sup>205</sup> However, for about 10,000 women who resettled in Australia between 1916 and 1918, and 31,000 who arrived in Canada during 1915 alone, this was a time of upheaval.<sup>206</sup> The pattern of female migration, drawn from a range of qualitative sources, is one of high activity at the outbreak of war, correlating with the unemployment that women faced during these initial months of conflict. This situation mirrored the surplus population rhetoric of the nineteenth century rather than that of the “superfluous” woman. Yet, this activity continued a trend of working women seeking opportunities overseas for themselves and, in many cases, their families.

The First World War created an extraordinary environment in which women found themselves challenged economically. The early years of conflict, with disruption to major industries, many of which employed a large volume of women, caused reduced employment. Those industries worst hit were the largest employers of women. Figures published by the Central Committee for Women’s Employment laid bare the female unemployment problem in the autumn of 1914, with many women also working short hours.<sup>207</sup> While the emigration trade slowed down considerably, not least due to the severe reduction in merchant shipping capacity, the BWEA continued its prewar promotion of schemes. This organisation and its partners skirted around each

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<sup>205</sup> Greaves, *The First World War*, pp.131-132

<sup>206</sup> Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia, reproduced at <<https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au>> [accessed 10/03/2016]; Canada Year Book, reproduced at <[https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb\\_r000-eng.htm](https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb_r000-eng.htm)> [accessed 10/03/2016].

<sup>207</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.44.

other, their interests in women's migration overlapping. Wartime brought a specific focus on female migration, as men were increasingly engaged in the conflict in Europe. Efforts on the part of emigration societies were not confined to responding to women's wartime employment difficulties. Their fundamental aim of populating the empire with white British women remained close to their *modus operandi*, which included keeping a close watch on opportunities for postwar migration.

Shipping companies clung on to emigrant business through sustained, highly visible advertising, targeted at women and children. Subsidised emigration brought opportunities for unemployed women, widowed women seeking to rebuild their lives, and those, newly-married, who were creating new ones. While Canada suffered an economic downturn, creating unfavourable conditions for immigration, New Zealand, and some Australian states, welcomed female domestic workers, offering far better conditions than in the UK. This came at a price, as hundreds of women sacrificed specialised and skilled occupations to take up domestic work.

By December 1916, the BWEA, alongside other emigration societies, was positioning itself to continue women's migration to empire destinations beyond the end of the war: "We would like it to be known", a joint letter declared, "that we are prepared...to utilise our machinery...in furthering any work of expansion and emigration which may be desirable in the future."<sup>208</sup> Similarly, the Salvation Army positioned its wartime scheme for widows to continue beyond the end of the war.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *Western Morning News*, 11 December 1916, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000329%2f19161211%2f125>> [accessed 22/08/2018].

<sup>209</sup> WNC 15/5/40 A Scheme to provide for the transference of Widows, with their families, from the British Isles to the King's Dominions Overseas. Salvation Army, January 1916.

Most women stayed in Britain and manoeuvred themselves and their families through the reconstruction years. However, for some, female migration continued to be part of a postwar dynamic, with schemes planned during the war implemented, but in the context of a society very different to that before the conflict. This chapter has introduced First World War overseas settlement into migration historiography. The next two chapters continue the themes introduced above to explore how, during the 1920s, the national fervour and imperialism that became ascendant during the war created a platform for the continued migration of women, within the framework of the government legislation.

## **Chapter 4. Challenging Surplus in the Wake of War: Unmarried Working Migrant Women**

This chapter explores how unmarried working women used overseas settlement as a vehicle to pursue employment opportunities during the 1920s. It builds on themes of the previous chapter to assess whether women were able to use migration as a route to independence and occupational diversity. I discuss the range of women's self-determination as migrants to demonstrate the diversity of experience involved in the settlement process. The era saw the introduction of overseas resettlement schemes in the British dominions for former service personnel, a policy consolidated in 1922 through the Empire Settlement Act. These initiatives placed women as targets for migration, as wives of former military servicemen, and as former service personnel themselves. Beddoe describes the immediate post war period as being "confusing" for women.<sup>1</sup> On one hand, gender equality featured through legislation such as the Representation of the People Act in 1918 and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, the former enfranchising some women and the latter, in theory, opening up greater and more diverse female employment.

Alongside their struggles to retain employment and occupational diversity, women were once again cast as surplus, a status viewed as a "considerable threat to social cohesion".<sup>2</sup> As a result, young working women

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<sup>1</sup> Beddoe, *Home and Duty*, p.50.

<sup>2</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.14.

were trapped within a pejorative popular discourse.<sup>3</sup> During this period, marriage and motherhood crystallised as a cornerstone of empire settlement, fuelled by eugenicist thinking, and linked to a preoccupation with racial preservation, particularly potent in the aftermath of the First World War.

In the previous chapter, I explored how, in the face of wartime unemployment, domestic service overseas held appeal to a minority of women who were prepared to pursue abroad what was an unpopular occupation in Britain. I build on the discussion about occupational diversity amongst British migrant women, and look into the factors that led them to lives overseas, and examine to what extent continuing trends held true for the beginnings of the interwar period, or whether this era brought a new set of dynamics for these women. The years after the First World War saw the profile of British migration revert to that of prior to the conflict, with the majority of migrants, that is men, often taking advantage of the settlement schemes for former service personnel. Women who migrated were often moving as a family group, either with, or following their husbands, a pattern that was long established and numerically dominant, yet one that had faded during the war.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, the volume of women who migrated was disappointing in the eyes of the empire settlement experiment of the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> However, the fact that women did choose migration raises questions about the nature of women's work and life in Britain during this time, and why some chose an established, but limiting profession in a developing society overseas rather than pursue emerging opportunities in new industries in a mature economy at home.

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<sup>3</sup> Melman discusses the aggressive obsession towards young, unmarried, working women on the part of the popular press and Beddoe explores the language used to describe them. See Beddoe, *Home and Duty*, p.48 specifically and, more generally, Melman, *Popular Imagination*.

<sup>4</sup> For patterns of migration relating to married women see Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.245.

<sup>5</sup> Gothard estimates that fewer than 100,000 women were assisted under the Empire Settlement Act during the 1920s. Gothard, 'The British domestic girl' p.73.

I introduce the chapter through a brief study of the occupational landscape within which women found themselves in late 1918 as the war ended and peacetime reconstruction began. I also revisit the theme of surplus women as discussed in Chapter 2, exploring how it was repositioned after the war, and continued to be applied as a rationale for targeting women for overseas settlement. The final two sections look at migration and occupational opportunity and diversity, and the agency women assumed. I examine the role of domestic service and migration, looking specifically into how this sat in the context of women's expectations around alternative careers in the sector overseas. I argue that migration offered those unmarried women who left Britain an alternative route to paid employment, whether to fulfil an ambition of financial independence, or as a pathway to marriage and motherhood.

**“What can the surplus woman do?”<sup>6</sup>**

The scenario of migration as a solution to alleviating unemployment in post-war Britain was not specific to women, as mass demobilisation also created significant employment challenges for men, but it was the impact of the latter that exacerbated the situation for female workers.<sup>7</sup> This section builds on Chapter 2's discussion of surplus women, while reintroducing the theme of anti-emigration, and in particular how it was positioned during the early interwar period. Women's work experience during the war had created new expectations amongst them, particularly regarding economic independence, and most commentators, from government officials to women's rights campaigners, agreed that women were unlikely to return readily to prewar

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<sup>6</sup> A headline from the column 'A Woman's Point of View' in *The Looker-On*, 18 October, 1919, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000507%2f19191018%2f017> [accessed 14/08/2018].

<sup>7</sup> Beddoe discusses women's employment issues in the wake of war. For example, she states that by 1921, there were 2% fewer women in the female workforce than in 1911. Beddoe, *Home and Duty*, p.48.



conditions.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, wartime work had provided some women with their first and only working experience, naturally placing their career ambitions in industries where their skills lay. For example, Braybon gives an example of a 19 year-old woman who refused domestic service work on the basis that her skills and experience lay in an iron works and that was the work she sought. She was refused unemployment benefit as a result.<sup>9</sup>

In early December 1918, weeks after the war ended, 6,000 female munitions workers from Woolwich and other parts of London marched to Whitehall to bring attention to the plight of women losing their jobs, a scenario replicated across the country.<sup>10</sup> These women, *The Labour Woman* reported:

voiced the growing uneasiness and dissatisfaction that exists in industrial areas throughout the country.....From a few weeks before signing the armistice up to the date of that demonstration, dismissals had been increasing rapidly. Women being discharged were finding it almost impossible to secure any other employment...<sup>11</sup>

The pattern of unemployment for women in 1919 was resonant of the early war years, with displacement from war work compounded by an economic downturn the following year.<sup>12</sup> This shift of direction for women workers, after a period during which their contribution to war work was lauded publicly, even if unwelcomed in part by male colleagues, was replaced by views which repositioned employment as a solely male issue.<sup>13</sup> The campaigning journal *The Labour Woman* took up the plight of unemployed women, reporting on demonstrations, documenting dismissals, and raising

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<sup>8</sup> This is a theme discussed in Holloway, *Women and Work* and Braybon, *Women Workers* and Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*.

<sup>9</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.180.

<sup>10</sup> WNC/32/3/69, *The Labour Woman*, Vol. VI. No. 8 December 1918, p.95

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.183.

<sup>13</sup> G. Holloway, *Women and Work*, p.147-8.

issues around unemployment benefit. By March 1919, statistics printed in the journal recorded 427,734 women and 26,770 girls in receipt of unemployment donation.<sup>14</sup> While in the postwar world, employment open to women expanded to include opportunities within light industries, for example, with more favourable conditions than domestic service, the latter sector remained dominant.<sup>15</sup> Women who resisted taking occupations in unpopular industries such as domestic service were penalised through removal of benefits, and there was general hostility towards the allocation of financial support to an out-of-work female labour force.<sup>16</sup>

While there was movement towards increased female employment in emerging sectors such as chemicals, electrical engineering and hosiery, those women whose careers had been built up in the traditional cotton industries, and who were located, geographically, away from where new industries were clustered failed to benefit.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, growth of new industries in terms of light manufacturing opportunities for female workers did not expand significantly until the mid-1930s.<sup>18</sup> Regional employment patterns became more pronounced, with the expansion of office work in South East England, and contraction of employment in the North West.<sup>19</sup> For those women who were in paid jobs, wages were low, conditions poor and occupational diversity lacking during the 1920s.<sup>20</sup> The narrowing occupational opportunities for

<sup>14</sup> WNC/32/3/69, *The Labour Woman*, Vol. III. No. 3 March 1919, p.30.

<sup>15</sup> Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, p.79 & p147.

<sup>16</sup> Holloway, *Women and Work*, pp.147-8.

<sup>17</sup> B. Eichengreen, 'The British Economy between the wars', in Floud, R and Johnson, P *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.327.

<sup>18</sup> S. Todd, 'Poverty and Aspiration: Young Women's Entry to Employment in Inter-War England', in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 15 (No.2), 2004, pp.119-142, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> Bruley, *Women in Britain*, p.68.

<sup>20</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.218.

working-class women after the war left domestic service and laundry work as the most available options.<sup>21</sup>

Neither was it only working-class women who faced employment challenges during the 1920s. Feminist journal *The Woman's Leader* shed light on women working in professional sectors such as clerical and bank workers, teachers, nurses and midwives, and reported the shortcomings of the benefit system in supporting them.<sup>22</sup> There were, for example, an estimated 1,000 nurses looking for work by September 1919.<sup>23</sup> This, the reporter concluded, was driven by attitudes on the part of policymakers being misaligned with the needs of the modern working woman:

...everyone still thinks that women, employed or unemployed, are a detail of the working world, a quiet, impassive, unimportant detail, easily exploited, easily oppressed, and not worth bothering about.<sup>24</sup>

Women who resisted being absorbed back into traditional models of female life, whether at work or in the domestic sphere, faced mounting criticism. Their opposition to domestic service, in particular, received a stridently hostile response in the media.<sup>25</sup> The accompanying emergence of propagandist discourse that positioned motherhood as the ideal role for women while at the same time disparaging those who sought alternative lives, in particular young “flappers”, was interwoven with a growing preoccupation

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.181.

<sup>22</sup> *The Woman's Leader*, Vol. XII, No. 42, 19 November 1920, p.897, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0002229%2f19201119%2f015> [accessed 09/08/2018].

<sup>23</sup> *The Looker-On*, 6 September 1919, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000507%2f19190906%2f011> [accessed 14/08/2018].

<sup>24</sup> *The Woman's Leader*, Vol. XII, No. 42, 19 November 1920, p.897, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0002229%2f19201119%2f015> [accessed 09/08/2018].

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion about the media response to women resisting domestic service see Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.186-87.

with an excess of the female population .<sup>26</sup> As a result, the estimated two million 'superfluous' women became a leading, and emotionally charged, preoccupation for many during the 1920s, captured through poetry by Vera Brittain in the immediate aftermath of war.<sup>27</sup> The revised version of the surplus woman differed from her Victorian counterpart in having access to more work opportunities, giving her a level of financial independence and personal ambition, yet this made her not only superfluous, but also dangerous to established society.<sup>28</sup>

The emergence of young, single working women as a dominant group in British society alarmed many.<sup>29</sup> The associated discourse adopted strongly misogynistic language, with prejudice against working women viewed approvingly in newspaper columns:

For some time complaints have been made...against the continued employment of women on the staff of the West Riding of Yorkshire Pensions Committee...The committee... had for some time been weeding out the women, with the result that upwards of seventy had been discharged...and employment given to twenty ex service-men.<sup>30</sup>

These combined factors served to create an environment which marginalised the working woman and positioned her as a target for promoters of empire settlement. The schemes implemented immediately after the war were rooted in moves initiated during the conflict. Conversations amongst government policy-makers during the conflict had identified unemployed,

<sup>26</sup> The interwar surplus woman is discussed particularly well by Melman, *Popular Imagination* and Beddoe, *Home and Duty*.

<sup>27</sup> Vera Brittain's poem, 'The Superfluous Woman', written in 1920, is used in Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, p.69.

<sup>28</sup> See Melman, *Popular Imagination*, pp.15-40 and Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, pp.70-71.

<sup>29</sup> For further discussion about the perceived threat of young single women to societal stability see Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, pp.69-73.

<sup>30</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 18 September, 1919, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000748%2f19190918%2f004> > [accessed 13/09/2016].

unmarried single women as a target for postwar resettlement.<sup>31</sup> The argument for female migration had long been wrapped around the rationale of resettling the excess female population overseas, both as a prospective labour source and as prospective wives for the excess of male settlers in the dominions. This lingered into the interwar period, the perceived role of women across the empire lying within the “sphere of home-makers” never far distant.<sup>32</sup>

Young women of the interwar period had grown up with views on motherhood established during the previous century, and therefore largely accepted how society defined it, as it gained power as an imperial tool.<sup>33</sup> The elevated status of motherhood remained largely intact after the war. Newspaper columnist “Portia”, while arguing for more positive support for single women also maintained that:

Of course, woman’s natural sphere is the home. Marriage with the man she loves and motherhood must ever remain the finest things in a woman’s life.<sup>34</sup>

This phase of female migration, designed during the war years, and implemented under the Empire Settlement Act, therefore inherited all the traits that had defined nineteenth-century colonisation when it came to race, class, culture and the belief systems that bound them.

There were, however, also voices against migration including that of the eugenics movement. For example, in June 1923, the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women held a meeting at Bath Guildhall to promote their work. Mrs Masters, a representative from the Victoria League, was present,

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<sup>31</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.14.

<sup>32</sup> This observation by Countess Buxton, active in the work of the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women, was published in the *Evening Telegraph*, May 29, 1923, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 08/08/2018].

<sup>33</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, pp.1-2.

<sup>34</sup> *Hull Daily Mail*, 29 January 1920, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000324%2f19200129%2f068> [accessed 19/12/2018].

along with the Chief Woman Officer of the Ministry of Labour and Sarah Grand, then Mayoress of Bath. Sarah Grand, while acknowledging the desire for resettlement to redress the population imbalance, also provided a gently dissenting voice against “our splendid men and women emigrating”, implicitly suggesting the perceived dangers that lay in losing the healthiest of the race.<sup>35</sup>

### **Beyond surplus**

Liberal MP Margaret Wintringham succinctly captured the prevailing thinking in a House of Commons debate about empire settlement in 1922:

As a result of the war...a great many women have been  
thrown out of employment, and if this bill is successful  
it will deal to a very considerable extent with the present  
surplus of 2,000,000 women.<sup>36</sup>

However, this was not a position embraced by everyone. Both the rejection of the notion of surplus women and opposition to emigration as a solution emerged during the period. “Quite a lot of nonsense has been written recently about “surplus women””, claimed “Belinda”, the features writer of the column “A Woman’s Point of View” in an October 1919 edition of the Cheltenham newspaper *The Looker-On*.<sup>37</sup> There was plenty of occupation, Belinda argued, to keep women employed during the country’s reconstruction. Women were fully aware of their contribution during the war, their new-found power of enfranchisement, and balked at attempts to relegate their status and attempts to ship them overseas, eliciting vehement rebukes:

“I’m one of the surplus women, one of the unwanted here...

<sup>35</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, Saturday June 30, 1923, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 5 January 2016].

<sup>36</sup> *The Woman’s Leader*, Vol. XIV, No. 19, June 9, 1922, p.147, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0002229%2F19220609%2F013%2F0003&browse=true>> [accessed 08/08/2018].

<sup>37</sup> *The Looker-On*, 18 October, 1919, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000507%2f19191018%2f017>> [accessed 03/03/2016].

...It's not our fault that we are women...

Only wait till the next election...We'll pay the men out, no

fear!<sup>38</sup>

There was also broader opposition to general emigration from political forums. There was a firm anti-migrationist stance from within the Labour Party, such as that of John Wheatley who proclaimed: "What is really in the minds of the Conservatives...is not so much Empire settlement as the disposal of our Empire proletariat".<sup>39</sup> Fellow Labour Party politicians, such as Neil Maclean, persisted in challenging and questioning policy on empire settlement:

The Government in bringing forward this scheme of Empire settlement and for sending out our people to the Dominions, at a cost of £150, are breaking one of the most solemn pledges that was made to the people of this country during the War...

There is ample opportunity in this country for anyone who desires to have it...<sup>40</sup>

Working-class domestic activism was concerned with improving social conditions, such as housing, and presented an alternative model of modern life to that of the imperial pursuits of middle-class emigration promoters.<sup>41</sup> This was complemented by policy campaigners such as Eleanor Rathbone, whose work focused on improving the economic lives of women in Britain, whatever their marital status, and allowing them to gain independence in a modern, post-

<sup>38</sup> *Grantham Journal*, 13 March 1920, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000400%2f19200313%2f101> [accessed 14/08/2018]. This poem, published in the newspaper, acknowledges the recent passage of the Representation of the People Act in 1918, which gave selected women the right to vote.

<sup>39</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.108.

<sup>40</sup> Hansard, 27 March 1928 vol 162 cc 377-430, reproduced at [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1928/mar/27/empire-settlement-1#S5CV0162P0\\_19280327\\_HOC\\_434](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1928/mar/27/empire-settlement-1#S5CV0162P0_19280327_HOC_434) [accessed 20/01/2017].

<sup>41</sup> For example, John Wheatley was the architect of the 1924 Housing (Financial Provisions) Act that aimed to tackle the housing shortage. Wheatley also worked to reduce unemployment during the 1920s. See I.S. Wood, 'John Wheatley' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, reproduced at <https://doi.org/liverpool.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36848> [accessed 14/09/2018].

First World War environment.<sup>42</sup> The focus of this study is not to interrogate the broader domestic environment during the early period of the Empire Settlement Act, but rather to reference it as a possible influential factor in directing focus away from overseas settlement amongst young women targeted for migration.

In addition, general migration during the interwar years occupied a tainted position amongst some working families, those needing to seek employment overseas often viewed as a failure.<sup>43</sup> Working-class women faced with poverty, however, were generally less preoccupied with being judged negatively in the eyes of society than those from the middle classes.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, internal migration had long been accepted as a route to occupation, including for women moving from rural areas to towns and cities, primarily for domestic work.<sup>45</sup> Young working women were, therefore, accustomed to leaving the family home to secure domestic employment, and this pattern continued into the interwar period, still designed around the unpopular “living-in” system.<sup>46</sup> While overseas migration seemingly offered little more than domestic work, its appeal lay in better employment conditions and the absence of class structures that so defined the British model.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, the notion of “Greater Britain” was heavily promoted amongst the architects of the Empire Settlement Act, including its leading proponent, Leo Amery, who, in 1923, insisted that the “common misrepresentation that it was exile for a British citizen to settle overseas” was

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<sup>42</sup> E. Rathbone, *The Disinherited Family. With an introductory essay by Suzie Fleming* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1986. First published London: Edward Arnold & Co.1924).

<sup>43</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.181.

<sup>44</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.222.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed study of this see K. Bartholomew, ‘Women migrants in mind. Leaving Wales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’, in C.G. Pooley and I.D. Whyte (eds), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants. A social history of migration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.174-190.

<sup>46</sup> For case studies of domestic service during the interwar period see Bruley, *Women in Britain*, pp.62-63.

<sup>47</sup> For discussion around domestic service and social hierarchy see Bruley, *Women in Britain* p.63.



false, arguing that “a Scotsman would be more at home in Toronto or Dunedin than in Birmingham”.<sup>48</sup> It seemed that common imperial links were, in cases, stronger than the notion of geographical distance, certainly for one prospective migrant who had “been to the Museum and learned all about Australia and the products, and everything”.<sup>49</sup>

While Belinda of the *Looker-On* optimistically saw a future for British women on home soil, the editors of *The Labour Woman* were cognisant of the moves towards reaffirming the role of women in empire settlement. In 1919, the journal reported on the moves towards legislation around migration and how it might impact surplus women. The narrow opportunities for working women overseas, mostly in the realm of domestic service, the journal concluded, needed “very careful watching”.<sup>50</sup> This did not imply for some, however, that female emigration necessarily needed to equate to a narrowing of opportunity. The notion of women being occupationally superfluous was also rejected, and there was ambition to exploit the skills developed during the war to ensure that both the individual and recipient country benefitted. In December 1918, the War Service and Women’s Legion, an organisation that supported the entry of women into industry during the conflict, wrote to the British Colonial Office to highlight the diversity of female occupation and their value to the empire, and listed:

Motor Drivers

Clerical workers

Mechanical Engineers

<sup>48</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, May 29 1923, reproduced at <

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000563%2f19230529%2f022> > [accessed 19/12/2018].

<sup>49</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173>> [accessed 28/08/2018].

<sup>50</sup> WNC/32/3/69, *The Labour Woman*, Vol. III. No. 3, March 1919, p.28.

Aeroplane makers

Wireless apparatus fitters

General engineering workers

Dairy farmers and

Market gardeners.<sup>51</sup>

“May we therefore ask your guidance”, the hopeful letter continued, “as to the possibility of finding openings for such women overseas, especially in the occupations above referred to?”<sup>52</sup>

If women were rejecting the notion of surplus, the dilemma for both working- and middle-class women lay in carving out opportunities that would consolidate their growing independence and freedom outside of marriage. Overseas settlement had a role to play for some, promoted through the migration schemes of the immediate postwar era, which came in two phases. Firstly, the initiative to provide former service personnel with the opportunity to settle overseas was presented as a way to alleviate the impact of mass demobilisation and to mitigate the potentially destabilising consequences of unemployment.<sup>53</sup> Secondly came the Empire Settlement Act in 1922, an expansion and consolidation of the earlier scheme.

In January 1919 the Overseas Settlement Committee (OSC) was established within the Colonial Office, an elevated version of the government’s emigration committee, tasked with effecting the scheme for settling former service personnel in the British dominions. The question of female migration

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<sup>51</sup> NAA A461 G349/1/6, Letter from the War Service & Women’s Legion to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December, 1918, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=199> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>52</sup> NAA A461 G349/1/6, Letter from the War Service & Women’s Legion to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December, 1918, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=199> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>53</sup> This initiative is dealt with in detail in Fedorowich, ‘British ex-servicemen’, pp.45-71.

remained “potent” and, as an affiliate of the OSC, and with a specific focus on this matter, was the newly-formed Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women (SOSBW).<sup>54</sup> Formed out of the philanthropic female emigration societies, SOSBW became the first quasi-state operation dedicated to women’s overseas settlement.<sup>55</sup> By the end of the decade the SOSBW was embedded across those organisations that actively engaged in female imperial migration, namely the Girl Guides, the Girls Friendly Society and the Young Women’s Christian Association, amongst others.<sup>56</sup>

Tasked with seeking out opportunities for women in Australia were Lisbeth Simm and Dorothea Pughe-Jones.<sup>57</sup> These women travelled as part of a group on behalf of the OSC, which saw female migration as a priority, largely in response to the Dominions Royal Commission of 1917 that had identified women’s migration as an essential component in postwar imperial reconstruction.<sup>58</sup> Alongside the Australian delegation, two other groups were sent to Canada and New Zealand for the same purpose.<sup>59</sup> Simm was a prominent member of the National Amalgamated Union of Labour and married to Matthew Simm, a Labour Party parliamentarian.<sup>60</sup> Active in the Women’s Labour League prior to the war, Simm had also been involved in attempts to open up a farming colony, on land near Glasgow, to economically-distressed women.<sup>61</sup> Pughe-Jones had farming experience and had been active in the

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<sup>54</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.15.

<sup>55</sup> SOSBW was an amalgamation of the Colonial Intelligence League, The British Women’s Emigration Association and the South African Colonisation Society. See Jean P. Smith “ ‘The Women’s Branch of the Commonwealth Relations Office’: the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women and the long life of empire migration” in *Women’s History Review* 25 (4) pp.520-535.

<sup>56</sup> Bush, ‘The Twentieth Century’, p.88

<sup>57</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.15.

<sup>58</sup> Gothard, ‘The British domestic girl’, p.72.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.76.

<sup>60</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.15.

<sup>61</sup> In her work looking at the Women’s Labour League, Collette discusses the work pursued by Lisbeth Simm, and her fellow activists, including ideas around the establishment of women’s farming colonies. Christine Collette, *The Newer Eve* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.42.

suffrage campaign in her native Wales.<sup>62</sup> During the war she had worked with the Voluntary Aid Detachment, filling the role of commandant and housekeeper at the Relatives' Hostel at the Hotel des Anglais in Le Touquet, France.<sup>63</sup> In July 1919, Lisbeth Simm and Dorothea Pughe-Jones travelled together to Australia on *SS Ulysses*.<sup>64</sup>

The brief for the female delegates encompassed similar hopes to those raised by the War Service and Women's Legion a few months earlier. The delegation was to establish "what openings there may be for the employment and settlement of women upon the land" as well as to explore what demand existed in "professional, commercial, industrial and other occupations".<sup>65</sup> Simm and Pughe-Jones were particularly interested in possibilities for British migrant women with land army experience being afforded the chance to pursue agricultural work.<sup>66</sup> This potentially encompassed a range of industries including fruit growing, horticulture, nursery gardening, dairying, and keeping of bees, poultry and pigs.<sup>67</sup> However, the women made their trip understanding that, for a successful agreement between Britain and Australia to be reached about migration, the demands for domestic help needed to be central to any proposal.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, the mission, despite its ambition for diverse occupations for women overseas, accepted that the range of employment for women in Australia was limited, and most female migrants would be confined to domestic

<sup>62</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.15; *Votes for Women*, September 30, 1910, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0002187%2f19100930%2f057> [accessed 13/08/2018].

<sup>63</sup> British Red Cross Register of Overseas Volunteers 1914-1918, reproduced at <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBM/REDCRO/7378> [accessed 13/08/2018].

<sup>64</sup> BT27/905/1 Passenger list, *SS Ulysses*, 23 July 1919, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA/BT27/0905/00/0015/P/0001F&parentid=TNA/BT27/0905000015/00025> [accessed 08/08/2018].

<sup>65</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6, Overseas Settlement Mission to Australia. Instructions. 26.9.1919, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=160> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>66</sup> Roe, *A Study of Desperate Hopes*, p.27.

<sup>67</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6, Overseas Settlement Mission to Australia. Instructions. 26.9.1919, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=162> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>68</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.15.

service, regardless of skills and experience, with jobs for teachers, clerks, typists and shop assistants adequately filled through Australian labour.<sup>69</sup> A draft response to the Jones-Simm report noted that only those women with sufficient capital to own farms and smallholdings would enjoy the opportunity to pursue agricultural work, partly due to a “strong sentimental objection to the employment of women in agricultural work”.<sup>70</sup> This was a stance that removed opportunity for female settlers who, building on their wartime experience in farming, sought alternatives to domestic service.

Despite a disappointing response for the prospect of women’s employment, the two women remained committed to the empire settlement scheme. Lisbeth Simm continued her promotion of overseas settlement, speaking on behalf of the government, throughout the decade. In 1927 she presented a talk entitled “Emigration to the Colonies” to the National League of Young Liberals in Tynemouth, North East England.<sup>71</sup> Dorothea Pughe-Jones also continued her engagement with empire destinations, making a trip to South Africa in 1927.<sup>72</sup>

The prospects for women seeking jobs outside of domestic service were more hopeful in Canada. Beyond the “urgent demand” for domestic servants in “every part of Canada”, the delegation sent to undertake the mission there presented a more hopeful scenario.<sup>73</sup> In addition to farming opportunities, there

<sup>69</sup> The outcome of the Jones-Simm mission is discussed in detailed in Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, pp.27-29.

<sup>70</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6, Draft response from the Commonwealth Immigration Office to the Official Secretary to the Governor-General on the subject of the report of the delegates appointed to enquire as to openings in Australia for women from the United Kingdom, 8/4/21, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=81> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>71</sup> *Shields Daily News*, Monday March 21, 1927, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001168%2f19270321%2f056> [accessed 08/08/2018].

<sup>72</sup> BT27/1164. Passenger List for SS *Demosthenes*, Liverpool to Australia via Cape Town, 17 December 1927, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA/BT27/1164/00/0015/P/0015F&parentid=TNA/BT27/1164000015/00478> [accessed 13/08/2018].

<sup>73</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6. Report to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates appointed to enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, April-September 1919, reproduced at

was, for example, anticipated demand for nurses and teachers in certain areas, and while there was little demand for clerks and stenographers, dressmakers were also sought after.<sup>74</sup> Never far away from the narrative of labour provision was the role of women in bolstering and consolidating racist imperial ambitions, with prospective teachers in rural areas urged to “do well to realize (sic) the opportunity offered them...when the importance of bringing to the children of foreign settlements a better and more civilizing influence must be appreciated by all who have the good of the empire at heart.”<sup>75</sup>

### **Absorbing an empire atmosphere<sup>76</sup>**

I introduced previously the work of the British Women’s Emigration Association (BWEA) and its partners, their role in facilitating the migration of women during the First World War, and how they identified with the ideology of empire settlement. In this section I continue these themes, but look specifically at how migration was promoted to women within the framework of empire ideology, and use one case study to demonstrate how one migrant responded to the opportunities available through the settlement schemes.

As mentioned above, coinciding with the inaugural settlement scheme in 1919 was the establishment of the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women (SOSBW), responsible for the implementation of policy that related to women.<sup>77</sup> Those eligible under the resettlement scheme included women’s branches of the armed forces, nursing services, the Women’s Land

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<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=112> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>74</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6. Report to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates appointed to enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, April-September 1919, p.8, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=109> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>75</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6. Report to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates appointed to enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, April-September 1919, p.8, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=116> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>76</sup> Minutes of the SOSBW, 1928

<sup>77</sup> J.P. Smith, ‘“The Women’s Branch of the Commonwealth Relations Office”: the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women and the long life of empire migration’, in *Women’s History Review*, 25 (4), pp.520-535.

Army and related corps.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, widows and dependents of former servicemen were eligible, continuing the support that had been available during the war.<sup>79</sup> SOSBW wasted no time in embracing their new role promoting and organising female emigration. The organisation was administered by Gladys S Pott, who belonged to a school of thought that women's empire settlement worked as a check against militant feminism in Britain.<sup>80</sup> Pott was part of the delegation that travelled to Canada to investigate employment openings for women, and presented her findings from a trip to Canada at a public lecture in London in November 1919.<sup>81</sup> The self-described "propaganda work" of the SOSBW included the appointment of a publicity officer in 1922, and improvements to the design and content of their magazine *Imperial Colonist*.<sup>82</sup>

This promotional work sat within a family of popular propagandist material that dominated the period. Strident empire promotion was reinforced by a range of supporting media, such as cinema and the genre of the empire romance. Empire romances became a leading feature of women's weekly magazines, providing targeted empire promotion across social classes, and allowing fictional unmarried young women to enjoy a period of freedom in the vast dominions until their inevitable marriage to a white British settler.<sup>83</sup> Appetite for such popular literature, and interest in migration, was fuelled by the war-related spike in marriages between British women and servicemen from the dominions.<sup>84</sup> This emerging literary genre was crucial to engaging

<sup>78</sup> Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen', p.57.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.61.

<sup>80</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.15.

<sup>81</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 November 1919, reproduced at

<<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000098%2f19191110%2f093>> [accessed 13/08/2018].

<sup>82</sup> SOSBW, 325.2:396 (06), *Summary of work during 1922*.

<sup>83</sup> Melman, *Popular Imagination*, p.134.

<sup>84</sup> Bush, 'The Twentieth Century', p.87.

women with an ideal of the British dominions. As a societal group, women had been marginalised in prewar empire writing, weighted with masculinity and absent of female protagonists.<sup>85</sup>

Empire romances built on the work of writers such as Bessie Marchant, whose female characters contrasted with those created in the mould of Ballantyne's Martha Mild.<sup>86</sup> However, while Marchant's characters were independent and adventurous, her novels were yet another route to engage young women with the notion of imperial motherhood.<sup>87</sup> As in the empire romances, Marchant allowed her heroines to sample adventure in the dominions before arriving at marriage, as in her novel *Daughters of the Dominion* published in 1909.<sup>88</sup> Marchant continued writing throughout the First World War and into the 1920s and 1930s, yet her later work remained resonant of prewar empire, her female characters failing to exist within the modernising environment within which her readers were growing up.<sup>89</sup>

In addition to popular culture we see the ways in which empire pervaded everyday life. As women played a central part in the culture of empire, this offers an additional dimension to understanding women's relationship with empire and migration. During the 1920s, empire was deliberately positioned as a juxtaposition to the notion of home, with efforts on the part of the Empire Marketing Board to create seamless connections through its advertising between production and consumption, the ultimate consumer the empire housewife.<sup>90</sup> The Empire Marketing Board was not primarily concerned with

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 89.

<sup>86</sup> See also Chapter 2 page for a discussion about his character Martha Mild.

<sup>87</sup> T. Doughty, 'The Empire Girl goes to War: Bessie Marchant's World War I fiction', in *Women's Writing*, 25(1) 2018 pp.95-108, p.95.

<sup>88</sup> Phillips, *Mapping Men*, p.110.

<sup>89</sup> Doughty, 'The Empire Girl goes to War', p.108.

<sup>90</sup> J. Allen Moore, 'Selling empire: a historical perspective on selling foreign products in domestic markets', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 8:2 (2016), p.273.



cultivating migrants, but it was one strand of orchestrated activity during the 1920s that contributed to the profiling of Empire as a national concern.<sup>91</sup>

SOSBW's own promotional strategy hinged on familiarisation with both the ideals and the reality of empire. Dame Meriel Talbot, who led the publicity activity, strongly advocated the engagement of young people, as prospective settlers, with empire.<sup>92</sup> This involved the organisation of a schoolgirls' tour to Canada in 1928 with pupils from Cheltenham Ladies' College and Huyton College near Liverpool making up the party, and representing, in the words of the society "the most suitable and best type of girl".<sup>93</sup> An initiative involving SOSBW and Canada's Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), the project placed young British women as an advert for empire settlement, their experiences disseminated through orchestrated radio broadcasts and school lectures on their return to Britain.<sup>94</sup> These organised tours of selected parties of schoolchildren formed part of a spectrum of educational exchange activity that peaked during the interwar period, and which also involved groups of Canadian teachers visiting Britain as well as vice versa, to ensure British imperial values were embedded across the seas.<sup>95</sup> As a practical follow up to introducing empire was the practical training offered to potential migrants. These included a new Department of Home Economics set up by the Khaki University of Canada at its London College, where women were offered courses in bee-keeping, dairying, poultry-keeping, gardening, dressmaking, healthcare and citizenship.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Constantine, *Buy & Build*, pp.12-13.

<sup>92</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.201.

<sup>93</sup> SOSBW, 1/SOS/1/33, Schoolgirl Overseas Tour Sub-Committee Minutes, June 1927- May 1930.

<sup>94</sup> K. Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of Empire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.80.

<sup>95</sup> M. Harper, ' "Personal Contact is Worth a Ton of Text-Books": Educational Tours of the Empire, 1926-39', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 32 (3) 2004 pp.48-76, P.51.

<sup>96</sup> Bush, 'The Twentieth Century', p.87.

By the late 1920s, the tone and language of reports were less hopeful. The SOSBW was “anxious” to connect with prospective migrants to take advantage of a sailing to Australia, arranged with the Salvation Army, and 194 unaccompanied women duly sailed on SS *Vedic* from Liverpool to Australia in October 1927.<sup>97</sup> However, attempts to redress the perceived problem of surplus women were countered by the volume of male migrants, with 252 unaccompanied men listed on the same voyage.<sup>98</sup> The challenges in recruiting women in Britain were mitigated by carefully-placed letters in SOSBW publications from settled migrants. The selection of published letters represented a range of both rural and urban location and occupation. All were positive, with comments ranging from “my only regret is that I was not able to come when I was younger” to “why the whole scene here is one vast moving picture that it seems scarcely possible to excel...”.<sup>99</sup> Despite these enthusiastic reports from the dominions from seemingly successful settlers, the reality was that the SOSBW was highly selective, on behalf of the Dominion governments, and gendered criteria were enforced for women wanting to take part in the assisted schemes. In addition to the legislative barriers for migrants, “home helps” were expected to be “attractive and cultured”, secretaries “thoroughly intelligent” and shop assistants “young and attractive”.<sup>100</sup>

The wartime years had seen a close relationship between the BWEA, an antecedent of SOBSW, and shipping companies keen to protect their commercial interests as much as possible during the conflict. The close

<sup>97</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 2 August 1927, reproduced at < <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000511%2f19270802%2f006> > [accessed 5 January 2016].

<sup>98</sup> Passenger List SS *Vedic* 14 October 1927, reproduced at < <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f1162%2f00%2f0002%2fp%2f0025f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f1162000002%2f00280> > [accessed 22/01/2017].

<sup>99</sup> SOSBW, 325.2:391 (94) The Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women, *Australia The Land of Hope and Sunshine. How Women can get there and what they say of it*, 1930.

<sup>100</sup> 1/SOS/1/1/31 SOSBW *Canada Committee* June 1928-October 1930

relationship between SOSBW and the shipping company Canadian Pacific prevailed, working in tandem to further their respective interests in women's migration. *The Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas*, published by the Oversea Settlement Department in 1923, soon after the advent of formalised empire settlement, included an advertisement for Canadian Pacific on the inside front cover.<sup>101</sup> The focus on women travellers was apparent both in the titling "Canada for Women" and the assurance that "special attention is paid to the comfort of women travellers". The visual messaging deployed was a diversion from the dominant shipping poster of the period, in which the various perspectives of the ship itself were the leading image.<sup>102</sup> Rather, here was a bucolic scene of a mother and daughter feeding their plentiful brood of hens and chickens. Implicit in this visual content was that the target market of young, single women were ultimately seeking, or destined for, marriage and motherhood.

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<sup>101</sup> SOSBW 325.2:396 (62), *Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas*. Overseas Settlement Department, London, 1923.

<sup>102</sup> D. Clampin and N.J. White, ' "Is it essential that a steamship company's poster must have a ship?": The shortcomings of British shipping posters c.1840 to c.1970', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 9:4 2017, pp.386-424.



**Figure 4.1** “Canada for Women” <sup>103</sup>

Shipping companies also played a role in marketing empire migration, and yet the imagery on the poster illustrated below is seemingly atypical, positioning a narrative of a future settler life around a young, white, working-class married couple, indicated by such signals as the man with flat cap rather than the usual visual of a ship.<sup>104</sup> Yet, while this may have indicated a divergence in approach, it was also aligned with the aggressive advertising of the post-First World War era during which time companies sold the world in which they operated, as much as the product itself.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> SOSBW 325.2:396 (62), *Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas*. Overseas Settlement Department, London, 1923.

<sup>104</sup> The findings of White and Clampin show that images of ships continued to dominate visual marketing strategies of shipping companies, and that the presence of a story remained rare. See Clampin and White, ‘British shipping posters’, pp.386-424.

<sup>105</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.16



**Figure 4.2** “Golden Prospects” <sup>106</sup>

Despite the fact that, in general, shipping companies during this period failed to understand the broader considerations of their market when it came to advertising, here was a peculiarly gendered approach, selling an alternative, future lifestyle to young women, and one which fitted centrally with the aspirations of the SOSBW concerning the role of white marriage and motherhood across empire destinations.<sup>107</sup> The promotional methods deployed by agencies such as the SOSBW further situated young unmarried women in the category of surplus and closely managed the direction of their futures, not simply through the use of propagandist imagery promoting empire, marriage and motherhood as discussed above, but also removing a sense of self-determination by heavily controlling where they settled, to meet the demands of empire destinations, and also to fulfil their own sense of imperial

<sup>106</sup> MMM.1993.207.2 Cunard Canadian Services, ‘Golden Prospects’, London British Colour Printing Co., about 1925, reproduced at <<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/collections/works-on-paper/shipping-posters/item-191110.aspx>> [accessed 19/09/2018].

<sup>107</sup> Clampin and White, ‘British shipping posters’, pp.386–424.

maternalism.<sup>108</sup> *The Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas*, referred to above, not only positioned empire destinations centrally, but also warned that “women and girls should be very cautious in accepting offers of employment in **foreign countries**”.<sup>109</sup> While attention was given to professions such as nursing, teaching and industrial work, it was clear that, for British migrant women, domestic service was what was on offer, and that the demand lay in rural areas, for example, in Australia where “in country districts the demand for domestic help in farm houses” was “very large”.<sup>110</sup>

### Seeking independence

While cognisant of the wider imperial agenda, the approach of the SOSBW failed to capture the emerging hopes of a new generation of young British migrant women who sought lives beyond this established construct. Generally, by the 1920s, urban centres were more attractive to young women in pursuing opportunities, and increasingly few moved to rural areas. Towns and cities offered more diverse opportunities for employment, as well as better prospects for marriage, and women who had fulfilled their contractual service might opt to relocate to an urban centre.<sup>111</sup> This is true of Gladys Leichti who arrived in Australia on board SS *Bendigo* in 1924.<sup>112</sup> Supported by the Salvation Army, Gladys moved from London where she had been employed in the domestic service sector, having also worked in a munitions factory during the war.<sup>113</sup> By 1911, Gladys and her elder sister were out of work, their father

<sup>108</sup> For more on the relationship between female emigration promoters and migrant women, see Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p. 99.

<sup>109</sup> SOSBW 325.2:396 (62), *Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas*. Overseas Settlement Department, London, 1923, p.6.

<sup>110</sup> SOSBW 325.2:396 (62), *Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas*. Overseas Settlement Department, London, 1923, p.11.

<sup>111</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.232.

<sup>112</sup> The story of Gladys Leichti's migration can be found as part of Migrations to a New World project, reproduced at <<http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk/liverpool.idm.oclc.org/Documents/SearchDetails/MV-MM92056>> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>113</sup> The economic challenges of the Leichti

dead and their mother working as a barmaid. Being from a family of six children, poverty was an issue for them. Despite being financially self-sufficient, Gladys, as an unmarried woman, would have been viewed through a popular lens as surplus.



**Figure 4.3** Gladys Leichti on board SS *Bendigo*, England to Australia, 1924.<sup>114</sup>

By the time she emigrated, Gladys' occupation was that of draper's assistant, yet she made the decision to pursue domestic service overseas.<sup>115</sup> Her biographical note on the website of Museums Victoria gives Gladys' first place of work as the newly-established city of Warrnambool on the coast of Victoria.<sup>116</sup> After a few months, Gladys sought and found work in Melbourne as a live-in cook. At the age of 39, Gladys married a German migrant with whom she had three children.<sup>117</sup> Gladys' biography of her migrant life gives focus to

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family, even before the death of Gladys' father, are outlined in the biographical note collated by Museums Victoria at <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/7765> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>114</sup> Gladys Leichti on board SS *Bendigo*, England to Australia, 1924, reproduced at

<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1302836> [accessed 19/12/2018].

<sup>115</sup> BT27/1054 Passenger List, SS *Bendigo*, London to Australia, 24 January 1924, reproduced at

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F27%2F1054%2F00%2F0003%2FP%2F0017F&parentid=TNA%2F27%2F1054000003%2F00484> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>116</sup> Biographical note reproduced at <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/7765> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>117</sup> See biographical note <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/7765> [accessed 06/09/2018].



the unconventional nature of her husband's arrival in Australia, as a seafarer who jumped ship.<sup>118</sup> Although unacknowledged as such, Gladys was equally nonconformist, providing a portrayal of a woman who refused to comply with her expected role as a British female migrant, despite travelling under the assisted framework of the Empire Settlement Act. Dismissing any apparent concern around being cast as surplus, she chose to work for ten years in Australia before getting married, and selected a non-British husband at an age when she might have easily been dismissed as an "old maid".<sup>119</sup>

Gladys' rejection of "Greater Britain" in her world as a migrant in Australia mirrored that of her husband's, Johannes (Jack) Stegelman. Jack abandoned his job as a ship's carpenter in 1911, while docked in Melbourne, to avoid conscription into the German Navy.<sup>120</sup> In 1924, the year Gladys arrived in Australia, Jack became a naturalised Australian. Gladys' refusal to conform to her expected role as a British migrant may well have been rooted in her own origins, her paternal grandfather having been born in Switzerland.<sup>121</sup> Assumptions made by those promoting migration as a tool of British white imperialism obscured the identities within which women may have framed themselves, as well as the diverse origins of British women. For those women who did not fit neatly into the construct of Britishness as settlers, there were consequences, not least at the outbreak of the Second World War, when Gladys' children faced local hostility due to their German ancestry.<sup>122</sup> This case study serves to illustrate the personal agency amongst women who migrated

<sup>118</sup> See biographical note <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/7765>> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>119</sup> For background to the emergence of the 'old maid' construct in Britain, see S.S. Lanser, 'Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid', in J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide, *Singlewomen in the European Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp.297-324.

<sup>120</sup> See biographical note <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/7765>> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>121</sup> 1871 England, Wales and Scotland Census, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBC%2F1871%2F0595%2F0010&parentid=GBC%2F1871%2F0003801798>> [accessed 06/09/2018].

<sup>122</sup> See biographical note <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/7765>> [accessed 06/09/2018].



during this period, and dilutes the impact of the imperial ideology that framed the Empire Settlement Act. While Gladys Leichti accessed the migration opportunity available through the Act, she defined her own identity as a migrant.

The personal agency demonstrated by Gladys Leichti was also present amongst other women who sought assisted passages. For example, Miss Ames, in February 1923, after war service and a broken engagement, approached the SOSBW and requested an opportunity in Canada as a home help, but not on the prairies, and not looking after children.<sup>123</sup> The nature of this interaction reflected a more responsive mode on the part of the SOSBW, and one that reveals the presence of more personal and sophisticated relationships with the young women with whom they were interacting, and yet one still defined by an inequality of power and decision-making.<sup>124</sup>

The power structures within families also impacted on the agency of young migrant women. The migration model of unmarried women following brothers overseas during the great migration is discussed to some extent in existing studies.<sup>125</sup> The context of unmarried adult women travelling as part of a family unit including parents has not enjoyed the same attention, and is worth more consideration. The example below is an extreme case, but one that illustrates how women were directed by the actions of other family members, especially men, and how the gender dynamics present removed decision-making power from them.

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<sup>123</sup> SOSBW, 1/SOS/11/1, Notebook of Emigrants, 1902-28.

<sup>124</sup> Chilton discusses the complexity of these relationships. Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, pp.99-100.

<sup>125</sup> For example, the example of Mary Taylor in Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.24.

The Kiddell family moved from Hythe in Kent to New Zealand in 1927.<sup>126</sup>

The family consisted of a retired customs officer, Ernest Kiddell, his wife Louisa, their daughter Lorna and a son, Colin, who had previously settled in New Zealand to pursue farming. Twenty seven year-old Lorna had studied accountancy and worked temporarily as a teacher in a local school, achieving financial independence.<sup>127</sup> Yet, when Lorna's parents got news of their son's struggles in maintaining his farm, the decision was made for the entire family to relocate to be with him. Lorna was resistant to the idea of migration, a newspaper piece reporting that:

The daughter did not want to leave England, and the idea of spending her life on a farm in New Zealand filled her with horror, but her parents persuaded her against her will to accompany them.<sup>128</sup>

In July 1927, shortly after the family's arrival in Auckland, all four members were found shot dead in a murder-suicide.<sup>129</sup> The father, seemingly responsible, had sent a letter to the police just prior to the incident detailing his son's "nervous breakdown", his daughter's "bad breakdown" and his wife being "broken-hearted".<sup>130</sup> As the detail of the incident unfolded through the subsequent inquest, a scenario was revealed that suggested Mrs Kiddell's agreement with her husband and son to a death pact, without the knowledge of

<sup>126</sup> *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 19 July 1927, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 15/03/2017].

<sup>127</sup> *Folkestone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald*, 9 July 1927, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000765%2f19270709%2f320>> [accessed 17/10/2018].

<sup>128</sup> *Hull Daily Mail*, 6 July 1927, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000324%2f19270706%2f006>> [accessed 17/10/2018].

<sup>129</sup> *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 19 July 1927, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 15/03/2017].

<sup>130</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 7 July 1927, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000748%2f19270707%2f005>>

Lorna, compounding the tragedy of her forced migration to which she “strongly objected”.<sup>131</sup>

The above case is an extreme example of the removal of women’s personal agency as migrants, evident throughout the stages of this family tragedy. The extent of agency amongst female migrants is particularly pertinent in the context of the social constructs in which they were, at least, ideologically placed. Lorna Kiddell attempted to resist migration, and yet her disempowered position within her family meant that her options were removed. While many women migrated because they accepted, or were forced to accept “gendered assumptions”, as demonstrated through Mrs Kiddell’s compliance, so too did they attempt to disrupt them, as in Lorna Kiddell’s case.<sup>132</sup>

One of the areas in which the taut tension between disempowered migrant and controlling authority is acutely evident is that of juvenile migration. This study does not place child and juvenile migration schemes centrally, but because young women did migrate under such initiatives, it is important to consider them. They provide particularly strong examples that not only illustrate themes of personal agency, but also the consequences of limited freedom amongst young female migrants that prevented them from pursuing independent opportunities.<sup>133</sup>

For the purposes of this section, I use case studies of young migrant women sourced from the records of the Catholic Emigration Association.<sup>134</sup> Religious philanthropic societies that positioned their migration activity in terms

<sup>131</sup> *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 19 July 1927, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000511%2f19270719%2f061> [accessed 17/10/2018] and *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 18 July 1927, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000563%2f19270718%2f023>. [accessed 17/10/2018].

<sup>132</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.217

<sup>133</sup> There is a range of literature about child and juvenile migration schemes. For example, see R. Parker, *Uprooted. The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2008).

<sup>134</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT.

of social and moral betterment, especially for young people, were more able to navigate through the standard criteria enforced by receiving governments.<sup>135</sup>

The main case study featured also helps to raise tangential thematic questions around the relationship between migration and health and well-being. For young women such as M, her association with the Catholic Emigration Association provided opportunities to move overseas, and yet also constrained her within a mechanism of control, which was an extension of her childhood experience. The Orphanage in which M grew up was operated by the Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society (LLCPS), which, by the time M emigrated, was part of the Catholic Emigration Association.<sup>136</sup> M emigrated to Canada in 1924, aged 18.<sup>137</sup> From an impoverished working-class background in Liverpool, and raised for most of her childhood in a Catholic orphanage after the death of her mother in 1916, while her father was away at war, M was far from the ideal female migrant promoted by emigration societies. Having been separated from her four siblings on her migration, the only direct voice of M captured in the extant official papers is a letter from her to the orphanage enquiring after her siblings, and also the girls with whom she emigrated:<sup>138</sup>

Dear Rev. Mother,

...I am quite happy here in Montreal but I would feel more contented if I was near the sisters, but I will do my best to get on. Mother how are the other girls getting on, that came out with the party, but when you here (sic) from E\_\_\_\_\_ will you kindly let me know her address, as I would like to write to her and also my Brother's address...

<sup>135</sup> Langfield, 'A Chance to Bloom', p.288.

<sup>136</sup> Parker, *Uprooted*, pp.93-94.

<sup>137</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Case papers, 'M'.

<sup>138</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT Letter from 'M' to Greenfield House, Billinge, Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1924.

This type of enquiry was one of the most common amongst young people migrated under child and juvenile migration schemes, not merely for practical reasons of maintaining contact, but also from a sense of responsibility towards other family members.<sup>139</sup> All other accounts of M's experience are filtered through the official documentation of the Catholic Emigration Association.

M's initial years in Canada hint at an unsettled start as a migrant, working as a domestic at four different homes in Montreal and Ottawa within six months of arrival.<sup>140</sup> Despite a visitor's report, completed after a visit in November 1924, recording that the employer was "very pleased" with M and she herself considered the place "the best home I got", and that she intended "to remain there for a long time", M was sent to another location less than two weeks later.<sup>141</sup> By early 1925, M was relocated to a new family where there was reported "mutual satisfaction" and regret on the part of M for "any trouble caused in her last place".<sup>142</sup> The reasons for M's multiple homes remains unexplained, but the ill-treatment and sexual and physical abuse of young migrants are well documented, and often resulted in them being moved around by the organisation responsible for their welfare.<sup>143</sup> Mental health was also a common reason for young people to be relocated.<sup>144</sup>

M's situation deteriorated as the decade progressed. In 1928 the Catholic Emigration Association had arranged for M to enter the Order of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, with an ambition to work in China.<sup>145</sup> This prospective role as a missionary overseas would have slotted into a well-

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<sup>139</sup> Parker, *Uprooted*, p.209.

<sup>140</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Catholic Emigration Association Location Paper 'M' 10 November 1924 – 5 March 1925.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Catholic Emigration Association, Visitor Report 'M', 4/3/1925.

<sup>143</sup> Parker, *Uprooted*, pp.221-232.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p.218.

<sup>145</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Case papers, 'M'.

established profile of British migrant women. However, M's experience in Canada ended in ill health, arrest and a threat of deportation, before her return to England.<sup>146</sup> By 1933, M had entered the USA illegally and was facing deportation until the Catholic Emigration Association intervened and took her back to one of their homes, although, as the Reverend Mother noted "Had I known the state of her health I would certainly not have entertained the idea for a moment".<sup>147</sup> The nature of M's documented illness is unclear, although she is described in heavily gendered terminology as being "simply eaten up with hysteria and jealousy" and "the cause of continual agitation".<sup>148</sup> On her migration, aged 18, M was recorded as having no medical history and was considered "sufficiently strong and active and intelligent".<sup>149</sup> By the time of her return to England, sometime after 1933, M was suffering from "a delicate state of health" and had undergone "2 or 3 serious operations in Canada".<sup>150</sup> After returning to the orphanage where she grew up, the Sister there, as a final entry on her record, reported M "as very ill and she shd. have sanatorium treatment".<sup>151</sup>

Whether the process of migration, or the experiences encountered in Canada were the cause of M's deterioration is unknown. The emotional and physical dislocation she endured as a child, and subsequent separation from her siblings when dispatched to Canada resulted in patterns of experience

<sup>146</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, note re: M's return to England from Canada and subsequent ill-health. n.d.

<sup>147</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Letter to Father Bennett from James T. Connor, The Catholic Emigration Association re: M, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1933.

<sup>148</sup> The treatment of women's mental health and the discourse attached to it is discussed in Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, p.80, and more generally, the relationship between migration and mental health is covered in detail through a case study of New Zealand in A. McCarthy, *Migration, Ethnicity, and Madness. New Zealand, 1869-1910* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

<sup>149</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Case papers, 'M'.

<sup>150</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, note re: M's return to England from Canada and subsequent ill-health. N.D.

<sup>151</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, note re: M's return to England from Canada and subsequent ill-health. n.d. For other examples of pre-WWI instances of migrant women returning to Britain through ill-health, see E. Richards, 'Running Home from Australia: intercontinental mobility and migrant expectations in the nineteenth century' in M. Harper (ed), *Emigrant Homecomings. The Return movement of emigrants 1600-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.88-89.

common to many young migrants who moved under child and juvenile migration schemes.<sup>152</sup> M's story certainly resonates with the "unfulfilled expectations, loneliness...and alien environment" that in "extreme cases" led to mental illness.<sup>153</sup>

The intersection of mental ill-health amongst female migrants, reported bad behaviour and their lack of independence is also evident amongst case notes of M's peers from the LLCPS. For example, K, who migrated to Canada in 1916 was considered by her employer to be "...a good child, and doing her best" and yet prone to "a fit of sadness" when she received a letter from her mother in Britain.<sup>154</sup> K's experience mirrored that of M's in her movement around jobs and despite her wanting to stay with her original employer was forced to move due to "sheer wilfulness".<sup>155</sup> Similarly, 18 year-old G sought out independence due to her unhappiness with her employer which caused her to "cry from morning until night as she gets fits of depression now and again...so she is thinking of leaving and taking a place of her own".<sup>156</sup> By 1928 G had found a new employer and was considered to be "quite capable of looking after her own interests".<sup>157</sup>

However, it is also possible to look at M's experience, and those of her peers, by critically assessing attitudes that prevailed towards young migrant women during this period and consider the possibility that their fate was intrinsically linked to resistance against the control applied to them existing in

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<sup>152</sup> Parker, *Uprooted*, pp.209-216.

<sup>153</sup> M. Harper, 'Migration and mental illness', in *The Psychologist*, 30 (2017) pp.76-79, reproduced at <http://the-psychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-30/january-2017/migration-and-mental-illness> [accessed 30/11/2018].

<sup>154</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, Visitor's Report of Child, "K", Jan 23 1917.

<sup>155</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, Visitor's Report of Child, "K", February 4 1918.

<sup>156</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, Visitor's Report of Child, "G", 19-10-1927.

<sup>157</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, Visitor's Report of Child, "G", 14 July 1928

tension with their own ambition for independence and self-determination. The pressure amongst juvenile migrants to conform to prescribed life trajectories also came from peers. Writing from Montreal to the Catholic Emigration Association in 1929, a young migrant woman expressed disapproval of a friend, who had joined her in Canada, having career ambitions beyond that of domestic service:

I really & truly hope she remains there for at least a few years...  
but she still has the great idea of getting into an office, though I  
keep telling her she is much better off in service, and I'm not the  
only one who has told her.<sup>158</sup>

For young women of the 1920s in Canada, office work in urban areas was often more attractive than working in factories, shops or the domestic service sector.<sup>159</sup> Not only did office work offer better wages, enabling independence, but, in the minds of young women, provided a career that they associated with modernity.<sup>160</sup> Such ambition amongst women for independence, both of career choice, and in terms of personal economy, was resisted by those who perceived a superficiality amongst those who pursued this path, as demonstrated in the letter above.<sup>161</sup>

In M's case, her failure to secure her independence may well have led to mental health deterioration. M's personal dislocation is evidenced in her letters and the visitors' reports that map the tragedy of her migration experience that wrapped her experience up with others similar, and linked it to

<sup>158</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, Letter from 'F' to "Reverend Father", October 8<sup>th</sup> 1929.

<sup>159</sup> D. Rose, L. Dillon and M. Caron, 'Lives of their own, a place of their own? The living arrangements of "business girls" in early twentieth-century Canadian Cities', *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 29:2 (2016), p.227.

<sup>160</sup> Rose, Dillon, Caron, 'Business Girls', pp. 227-8.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228.



the impact of a transnational existence as a migrant.<sup>162</sup> For M, this meant being removed from family members, both in England and Canada, and yet also lacking the agency to manage the loss of critical ties. M was an adult when she migrated, yet the control that the Catholic Emigration Association exercised over her extended into her late 20s. Her attempts at independence, whether through reacting against the workplaces in which she was placed, or moving to the USA, albeit illegally, resulted in continuing intervention on the part of the orphanage that had shaped most of her life. M's treatment by the authorities which she encountered was resonant of the nineteenth-century approach to female migrants who were considered to be more "mentally unstable and more likely to be lost after migration" and, given her assumed fragility, she was afforded little space to develop her own life options, even as a grown woman.<sup>163</sup>

The contrast between migrants such as M and the privileged, educated and middle-class young women of the 1928 tour of Canada was marked. The latter was the cohort of young women that imperialists wished the empire to be built upon, and yet the need for opportunity often lay amongst those similar to M. For young women such as M, the ideology of empire settlement and their role within it, and any concerns that their status might be "surplus", was insignificant compared to the impact of marginalisation, denial of personal agency and separation from family and friends.

### **Beyond surplus**

The first opportunity for women to seek opportunities overseas came with the postwar resettlement initiative for former service personnel, targeted at

<sup>162</sup> The importance of transnational ties and the relationship with mental health amongst migrants in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New Zealand is discussed in McCarthy, *Migration, Ethnicity, and Madness*, pp. 141-168.

<sup>163</sup> S. Shubin, 'Critical Perspectives on Histories of "Madness" and Migration', in Harper, *Migration and Mental Health*, p.51.

both women and men, a scheme in place between 1919 and 1922. For women, this included those who had completed a minimum length of service, and their dependents, and also widows and wives of former service personnel.<sup>164</sup> It is difficult to locate former servicewomen who travelled between these dates, whether assisted or not. For example, on passenger lists, while it is possible, on occasion, to identify former servicewomen travelling between these dates, few identify their occupation. One exception is Eva West, travelling alone to Sydney in February 1922, and listed as a “Nurse VAD”.<sup>165</sup> Along with over 700 other third-class passengers on board the ship *Hobsons Bay*, and contracted by the Commonwealth Government, Eva’s fellow passengers included single men, men with families and other women travelling alone, collectively, meeting the profile of those targeted under the scheme.



**Figure 4.3** Advertisement for overseas resettlement of ex-service men and women.<sup>166</sup>

Violet Reading may also have taken advantage of the scheme. As a young woman who had worked as a surgical dresser during the war, in April 1920, at the age of 23, she emigrated to Antler in Saskatchewan to be

<sup>164</sup> Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen', p.57.

<sup>165</sup> BT27/981, Passenger List, *Hobsons Bay*, London to Sydney, 28 February 1922, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F0981%2F00%2F0042%2FP%2F0013F&parentid=TNA%2F0981000042%2F00533> [accessed 21/10/2018]. VAD is an abbreviation of Voluntary Aid Detachment.

<sup>166</sup> *Yarmouth Independent*, 29 May 1920, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001943%2f19200529%2f050> [accessed 21/10/2018].

employed as a domestic by J Barnett.<sup>167</sup> It is possible to track Violet's progress in Canada thanks to a combination of formal documentation and recorded local history. Violet went into farming when she married fellow English migrant Henry James in 1923. The family lived together, farming in Antler, until they moved to Winnipeg in 1942.<sup>168</sup> Her diversity of experience is potentially obscured if seen only through the perspective of a married British migrant woman, and yet, as a single woman, she put experiences of wartime to one side to become a domestic, complying with the labour demands of the British dominions, as many women with a range of skills also did in order to secure employment overseas.

The Handbook for Women who are thinking of settling overseas, referenced in the previous section, made no secret about the limited opportunities for women in dominion countries. There was limited demand, it stated, for governesses, nurses or teachers in any of the targeted destinations of Canada, Australia or New Zealand. While this scenario had been clear in the case of Australia as a result of the women's visiting delegation in 1919, here was a shift in the message from Canada. For working-class women, similarly, any hope in transferring skills to work beyond domestic service, for example in agricultural work, was misplaced, and opportunities for industrial employment were sparse.<sup>169</sup> In November 1919, while Britain witnessed the mass

<sup>167</sup> Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935, Saint John, New Brunswick, 1920, reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1263/CANIMM1913PLIST\\_2000908419-00294?pid=1475558&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc%3Daj164%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26qss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3Dviolet%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dreading%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy\\_x%3D1%26msbdp%3D2%26msbdy%3D1897%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D1475558%26dbid%3D1263%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D7&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=aj164&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1263/CANIMM1913PLIST_2000908419-00294?pid=1475558&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3Daj164%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26qss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3Dviolet%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dreading%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy_x%3D1%26msbdp%3D2%26msbdy%3D1897%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D1475558%26dbid%3D1263%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D7&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=aj164&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)> [accessed 21/10/2018].

<sup>168</sup> *Footprints in the sand of time*. Antler and District History Committee 1983, Antler, Saskatchewan p.641, reproduced at <<http://www.ourroots.ca/page.aspx?id=905278&amp;qryID=6dac3af7-9370-4abf-a9ba-b621aa7a9fa8>> [accessed 16/11/2016]. Census 1911, reproduced at <[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)> [accessed 16/11/2016].

<sup>169</sup> SOSBW 325.2:396 (62) *Handbook for Women who are thinking of Settling Overseas*, Oversea Settlement Department, 1923.

demonstrations by unemployed women across the country, the Canadian Pacific ship *Metagama* left Liverpool for Canada carrying the first party of women under a new resettlement initiative. As former service personnel, these 75 women were eligible to travel in a party organised by the OSC.<sup>170</sup> The image presented of this group in the Dundee Evening Telegraph's newspaper report, embarking together, dressed in their military uniforms, held a poignancy in the knowledge that these women were having to discard a life they were clearly proud of, destined for the unpopular domestic service sector.

For those women seeking employment after the war through migration opportunities, however, this is where the demand overseas lay, a pattern established during the Great Migration period and visible during the First World War. During the war, unemployed women who accepted the offer of subsidised passages to Australia viewed domestic service as a preferred alternative to the challenge of seeking openings in jobs in which their main skills lay, such as office work or dressmaking. The attraction of Australia was partly as a country which disregarded the class distinctions that so defined society in Britain, and served to mitigate the less favourable aspects of domestic work, as illustrated through the viewpoint of one prospective migrant:

I'd rather go into service there than here. You're looked down upon here, but they say Australian ladies would be ashamed not to be able to scrub a floor.<sup>171</sup>

In addition, the simplicity of modern Australian homes was promoted as a way to motivate young migrant women about the domestic service sector overseas. For example, Lady Cook, wife of the High Commissioner for

<sup>170</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 20 November 1919, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000563%2f19191120%2f123> [accessed 11.07.2016].

<sup>171</sup> *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 22 December 1914, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001464%2f19141222%2f173> [accessed 02/03/2015].

Australia, Sir Joseph Cook, talking to a group of young women just prior to their voyage in January 1926, spoke of the advantages of working as a domestic in Australia: "They do not take the time which English houses take to clean...as they are all of the bungalow type, with no wearisome flights of stairs".<sup>172</sup> However, within this same group there was evidence of ambition amongst the young women beyond what was on offer, as the newspaper reported, "The girls I found full of enthusiasm for the new life they are facing. One of them told me that they thought Australia offered wider opportunities for girls than England did at the present time".<sup>173</sup>

Eligibility for training, and for assisted passages afterwards, was dependent on nominations from established Australian residents. In September 1927, the OSC raised with the Australian Migration and Settlement Department the plight of Misses Doris and Fay Cowan of Edinburgh, shop assistants seeking new lives as domestics, yet ineligible for training.<sup>174</sup> In the event, the Cowan sisters succeeded in migrating to Australia, sailing to Melbourne on the Orient Line ship *Otranto* in September 1928, listed still as shop assistants, and in the company of 492 other unaccompanied women from Britain.<sup>175</sup> The demand for British female migrants varied from country to country and, in the case of Australia, from state to state. In 1922, the Premier of New South Wales raised the need for domestic servants from Britain:

<sup>172</sup> 'Simple Australian Homes' in *Leeds Mercury*, 28 January 1926, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000748%2f19260128%2f077> [accessed 13/12/2017].

<sup>173</sup> 'Simple Australian Homes' in *Leeds Mercury*, 28 January 1926, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000748%2f19260128%2f077> [accessed 13/12/2017].

<sup>174</sup> NAA: A1, 1932/7823, Letter from the Overseas Settlement Committee to the Deputy Director of Migration & Settlement for Commonwealth of Australia, 22 September 1927. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Interior, File of Papers. Subject: Market Harborough Domestic Training 1927 file, reproduced at [www.recordsearch.naa.gov.au](http://www.recordsearch.naa.gov.au) [accessed 23 January 2017].

<sup>175</sup> BT27/1207, passenger list, SS *Otranto*, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2fbt27%2f1207%2f00%2f0004%2fp%2f0016f&parentid=tna%2fbt27%2f1207000004%2f00646&highlights=%22%22> [accessed 23.01.2017].

...the state is receiving on average only 23 female domestic immigrants per month, whilst the demand is such that up to 100 monthly could be absorbed without difficulty.<sup>176</sup>

While there remained much need for domestic support in rural areas, demand for British labour coincided with the urbanisation of Australia, notably in the construction of Canberra in the 1920s.<sup>177</sup> This was not simply to provide labour, but was also pivotal to the creation of a modern Australian city whose identity sat firmly within the white imperial family, eschewing any available Aboriginal domestic workers.<sup>178</sup> A group of domestic workers brought to Canberra, with the help of the SOSBW, arrived at Sydney in early 1927.<sup>179</sup> The women came from across Britain, including from London, Hull, Coventry, and areas of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Within the group were two sets of sisters, Christina and Helen Rankin from Blackridge, West Lothian, and Nora and M Coogan from County Fermanagh, travelling with their mother, Catherine.<sup>180</sup> Also amongst the group were Anna Redpath and M Couch, both from the same street in Musselburgh, Scotland, likely to have known each other, and quite possibly workmates. This detail exposes the continuation of trends seen throughout British nineteenth- and twentieth-century migration, those of kinship and family ties, and the influence of work colleagues discussed in the previous chapter. Regardless of sustained publicity and advertising on the part of agencies such as SOSBW and associated shipping companies, the role of family and friend networks remained pivotal in personal

<sup>176</sup> NAA: A461, H349/1/6 Part 1 Prime Minister's Department, Immigration Encouragement – Domestic Servants – General, reproduced at < [www.recordsearch.naa.gov.au](http://www.recordsearch.naa.gov.au) > [accessed 23/01/2017].

<sup>177</sup> For detail about the development of Canberra and associated domestic servant project see Chilton, *Agents of Empire* pp.152-172.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p.157.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p.162.

<sup>180</sup> BT27/1132/19. Passenger list, SS *Vedic*, London to Sydney 17 December 1926, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna%2ft27%2f1132%2f00%2f0085%2fp%2f0014f&parentid=tna%2ft27%2f1132000085%2f00399>> [accessed 31/08/2018].

migration choices, and actually served to foil propaganda of those with motives that were commercial and ideological.<sup>181</sup>

The tensions between women migrating and the work they were expected to undertake became apparent. Amongst the group of women who travelled to Canberra in late 1926 was Miss McDade, who, on arrival at Canberra, absconded and returned to Sydney, much to the disgust of those who had organised her passage.<sup>182</sup> Nineteen year-old Rose McDade from Bargeddie in Lanarkshire was amongst a growing number of young women who rejected the limited option of domestic service and yet used the opportunity of an assisted passage overseas to seek an alternative life.<sup>183</sup> Rose was not alone in seeking independence and falling foul of emigration organisers, and this was not a trend peculiar to the interwar years, but rather a pattern amongst young women who refused to comply with enforced control in their futures.<sup>184</sup> English women in Canada were criticised for walking out of domestic posts without notice and the selecting bodies received equal disapproval for their “bad selections”.<sup>185</sup>

The moral behaviour of young migrant women was scrutinised and emigration bodies and their partner organisations saw it as their role to intervene and protect them, within the controls of established mechanisms of maternalism.<sup>186</sup> The rejection of these controls is a constant theme in the literature of single female migration and can also be identified across migration schemes. While juvenile migration is not generally discussed in the work that

<sup>181</sup> Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p.83.

<sup>182</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, 162.

<sup>183</sup> BT27/1132/19. Passenger list, SS *Vedic*, London to Sydney 17 December 1926, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA/BT27/1132/00/0085/P/0014F&parentid=TNA/BT27/1132000085/00578>> [accessed 31/08/2018].

<sup>184</sup> Bush, *The Right Sort of Woman*, p.397.

<sup>185</sup> 1/SOS/1/1/31 SOSBW *Canada Committee June 1928 – October 1930*.

<sup>186</sup> Bush, ‘The Twentieth Century’, p.87 and Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.113-114.

explores the migration of young, unmarried working women, there is commonality. I have introduced some of the young women who were migrated with the Catholic Emigration Association above, and discussed issues of control, independence and mental health. There were also young women such as F, whose behaviour, like that of Rose McDade, was scrutinised and judged through the prism of how young migrant women were expected to behave. F migrated to Canada in 1925 with the Catholic Emigration Association.<sup>187</sup> Working in a club in Montreal by 1927, she considered her job “wonderful”, and the visitors’ reports between 1926 and 1928 describe a well-settled and happy young woman.<sup>188</sup> However, the reports were also critical of F being “rather too fond of amusement” and “needed checking with regard to Dancing etc. so late at night”.<sup>189</sup>

These situations illustrate the shift in expectations on the part of British women in seeking domestic employment overseas, and similar responses were evident in Australian states also. The Goldsmid sisters, arriving at Brisbane in 1923 as “lady helps” rejected the conditions of employment offered to them on arrival, complaining that they differed, unfavourably, from those agreed prior to departure.<sup>190</sup> This claim was dismissed by the Commonwealth Immigration Office, their complaints and attempts at negotiation dismissed as being due to the sisters being “highly strung” and having an “exalted opinion of their own importance”.<sup>191</sup> Such disparaging dismissal of the sisters’ anticipated occupation was resonant of the popular discourse young unmarried women faced in Britain, and yet also common to the migration experience as

<sup>187</sup> Nugent Care Archive, 364 NUG, 362 CAT, The Catholic Emigration Association, Visitor’s Report on Child “P”.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> NAA: A461, H349/1/6 Part 1. Memorandum from the Commonwealth Immigration Office for the Secretary, Prime Minister’s Department, Melbourne, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1923, reproduced at

<<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=95367>> [accessed 17/09/2018].

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.



demonstrated by Harper in her work on Canada, and not least influenced by prejudice and negative perceptions of English settlers.<sup>192</sup>

Other migrants were more strident in using resettlement to support their required conditions of work, and ambitions. During the 1920s, young women became more militant in their demands for increased occupational choice and for working on their own terms. In 1928, a party of migrants arriving in Melbourne refused to take up their posts, partly due to an issue of wearing uniforms. The Victoria League, as the nominating society, negotiated with the young women, offering support in their career development after their one year of domestic service. This resulted in three women taking over a drapery business and one running a flower and fruit enterprise.<sup>193</sup> An increasing acknowledgement on the part of SOSBW that young women were seeking more to their migrant lives than domestic work and marriage, and no doubt in order to attract more interest amongst prospective settlers, led to reports about those women who had completed their required year of domestic service, a stipulation of receiving assisted passage, and moved on to alternative fulfilling careers. This included two women who had become friends on the voyage to Australia and who, after three years, were employed as a teacher and laboratory worker respectively.<sup>194</sup> It was not only young women themselves who were resistant to traditional domestic service, but also their mothers. Susannah Nicholls migrated to Australia with her family, including her daughter Margaret, and as they settled into their new life, Susannah supported Margaret in establishing a career, writing to her relatives in England about “Margie” and

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<sup>192</sup> Harper, ‘Rhetoric and Reality’, pp.160-180.

<sup>193</sup> 1/SOS/1/32 SOSBW, Australia and New Zealand Committee, 11 June 1928 – 7 November 1933.

<sup>194</sup> SOSBW, GB, 106 1sos, SOSBW Committee meeting minutes, 1930.

that “We feel that though private service is well paid, she is rather too good for it”.<sup>195</sup>

### **Beyond domestic service**

In this section I discuss occupational activity amongst women who were able to work outside of domestic service, and explore individual successes. There was, in reality, a misalignment between many young women who wanted to migrate, and the demands of domestic service. Factory and office workers were, for example, considered unsuitable.<sup>196</sup> Harper and Constantine discuss the extent of women’s personal agency, and while those who settled overseas did so within a framework over which they had limited control, whether the ideology of empire, the forces of global labour, the limitations of occupational opportunity, or, at closer quarters, marriage and motherhood, they navigated through an environment cluttered with policy, business and imperial activism in order to achieve personal betterment.<sup>197</sup> There were models of migration for women that sat outside the drive to relocate individuals that SOSBW pursued. For example, the British company Cadbury, Fry and Pascall selected a group of female workers from their operations in Britain specifically to help set up a new factory in Tasmania.<sup>198</sup>

Working-class migrant women, while constrained within certain occupations, still had the advantage of their status of white British settlers that they used to assume some control of their lives. This contrasted starkly with that of Aboriginal women who were caught up in a society that ensured they rarely moved beyond the domestic service industry.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to ‘Dear Meopham Ones’, 1 June 1924.

<sup>196</sup> See Gothard, ‘The British domestic girl’, p.78 and Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp.97-98.

<sup>197</sup> See Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.244-245.

<sup>198</sup> E. Robertson, ‘Belles’.

<sup>199</sup> Higman, *Domestic Service*, p.81.

## Women on the land

The next chapter discusses at length married women who worked on the land within their family unit. The section below explores to what extent unmarried women pursued careers in agriculture. Farming in Canada was an established occupation amongst those women who could afford the investment. White British migrant women pursuing farming benefited from nineteenth-century legislation that facilitated their settlement of land while reducing rights for aboriginal communities.<sup>200</sup> Their successes were recorded by the delegation sent by the OSC to Canada in 1919 to explore opportunities for women.<sup>201</sup> The delegates visited a number of women, either themselves prewar migrants, or children of English migrant farmers. The women interviewed were mostly unmarried and working in partnership, active in a range of agricultural industry including fruit, wheat, poultry and dairy farming, as well as employing female labour.<sup>202</sup> Examples of success carved out through hard work, risk-taking and entrepreneurship were presented in the delegates' report, exemplified by the case of Miss L, a British migrant woman who had arrived in Canada in 1912.<sup>203</sup> Miss L started work as a fruit picker, gardener and glasshouse worker before saving enough money to buy her own farm, which, by 1919, she was running with another woman.

<sup>200</sup> M. Buddle, *The Business of Women: Marriage, family and entrepreneurship in British Columbia 1901-51* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), p.5.

<sup>201</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6. Report to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates appointed to enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, April-September 1919, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=139> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>202</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6. Report to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates appointed to enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, April-September 1919, pp31-34, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=139> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>203</sup> NAA: A461, G349/1/6. Report to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates appointed to enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, April-September 1919, p.33, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=95366&S=1&N=237&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=95366&T=P&S=141> [accessed 10/09/2018].

The profile of women in farming was one seemingly defined by class and wealth, especially amongst such settlers as the “class-conscious orchardists of British Columbia”.<sup>204</sup> In 1920, *The Labour Woman* warned that, for women to be successful agriculturalists and landowners, capital investment was a necessity.<sup>205</sup> Yet, taking the occupation of gardener as an illustrative example, a search of passenger lists demonstrates that British female farmers migrating during the 1920s to Canada, while few numerically, do demonstrate a demographic diversity. This search was based on dates 1919-1929, of ships sailing to Canada. Of about 2500 returns, there were 11 British female migrants listed as gardeners.<sup>206</sup> Amongst a party of Salvation Army migrants, sailing from Liverpool to Canada in August 1922, was 19 year-old gardener Lizzie Cassidy.<sup>207</sup> Two years earlier, sailing second class to Canada on the *Megantic* was Miss Elizabeth Kingsford Franklin, also listed as a gardener.<sup>208</sup> These women’s backgrounds varied significantly. Lizzie Cassidy lived in Wallasey, near Liverpool, the daughter of Irish migrants whose father was a market gardener’s labourer, the likely route to her own career.<sup>209</sup> Elizabeth Kingsford Franklin was the daughter of a ribbon manufacturer from Coventry, living, in 1911, with her father and three professional brothers, as well as three servants.<sup>210</sup> Her final destination was to be Peterborough, Ontario, to live with first cousins, and not to pursue her career in gardening, but to become a

<sup>204</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.33.

<sup>205</sup> WNC/32/3/69, *The Labour Woman*, Vol.VIII. No.7. July 1920 p.112

<sup>206</sup> Search based on passenger lists reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 13/09/2018].

<sup>207</sup> BT27/976 Passenger List, *Megantic*, Liverpool to Quebec and Montreal, 26 August 1922, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F0976000013%2F00193%2F007F&parentid=TNA%2F0976000013%2F00193> [accessed 13/09/2018].

<sup>208</sup> BT27/920 Passenger List, *Megantic*, Liverpool to Quebec and Montreal, 30 October 1920, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F0920%2F00%2F0048%2F0032F&parentid=TNA%2F0920%2F00%2F0048%2F0032F> [accessed 13/09/2018].

<sup>209</sup> Census of England and Wales, 1911, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBC%2F1911%2F0319%2F0033&parentid=GBC%2F1911%2F0319%2F0033> [accessed 13/09/2018].

<sup>210</sup> Census of England and Wales, 1911, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gb%2f1911%2f0319%2f0033&parentid=gb%2f1911%2f0319%2f0033> [accessed 13/09/2018].

“domestic companion help”.<sup>211</sup> Both these women may have been described as surplus, both defined by their marital status. However, such categorisation denies Lizzie her status as an ambitious young gardener in Canada, defiantly stated as her occupation in the list of Salvation Army assisted passages, during a time when most of her migrant peers were entering domestic service overseas. This also obscures the breadth of personal agency that Elizabeth may have had, hinted at in her passenger declaration in which she stated her reason for moving to Canada as being for “employment – and interesting experience”.<sup>212</sup>

### Seeking professions and selling skills

In Chapter 2 I introduced the theme of women’s use of writing as a mechanism to challenge and explore the societal constraints within which they existed, and to seek agency for their female characters. Women as transnational migrants are characterised in the work of feminist activist and writer Winifred Holtby. In her fictional work *The Land of Green Ginger*, Holtby creates an impression of a connected, middle-class world of female professionals for whom access to opportunities is assumed. In Holtby’s world,

<sup>211</sup> Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919-1924, Passenger’s Declaration, Franklin, Elizabeth Kingsford, reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1588/30927\\_2000901361-00422?pid=475025&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=3Darj46%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Delizabeth%2520kingsford%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dfranklin%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1876%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DR\\_OOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D475025%26recoff%3D5%25206%25207%26dbid%3D1588%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D4&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=arj46&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1588/30927_2000901361-00422?pid=475025&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=3Darj46%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Delizabeth%2520kingsford%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dfranklin%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1876%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DR_OOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D475025%26recoff%3D5%25206%25207%26dbid%3D1588%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D4&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=arj46&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)> [accessed 13/09/2018].

<sup>212</sup> Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919-1924, Passenger’s Declaration, Franklin, Elizabeth Kingsford, reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1588/30927\\_2000901361-00422?pid=475025&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=3Darj46%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Delizabeth%2520kingsford%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dfranklin%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1876%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DR\\_OOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D475025%26recoff%3D5%25206%25207%26dbid%3D1588%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D4&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=arj46&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1588/30927_2000901361-00422?pid=475025&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=3Darj46%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Delizabeth%2520kingsford%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dfranklin%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1876%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DR_OOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D475025%26recoff%3D5%25206%25207%26dbid%3D1588%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D4&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=arj46&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)> [accessed 13/09/2018].

those women who do settle overseas do so for purposes of career or self-advancement and look further afield than the British empire:

Both girls knew that Joanna regarded England as a place from which one sailed for South Africa, or possibly China, or Bolivia or Thibet.<sup>213</sup>

Holtby's novel is positioned as one about travel and adventure. It rejects the concept of woman as homemaker, and critically, placed female mobility at its centre.<sup>214</sup> Travel is used as a metaphor for locating a female identity alternative to that bestowed by society, most notably in this case, through the dénouement of the novel in which the main character, Joanna, sails from Britain to South Africa.<sup>215</sup> A theme of mobility is applied to define the female characters of the novel as independent, educated women who use the world to further their autonomy, and to use their skills to build alternative personal existences to that of the British white colonial dominance against which Holtby was reacting.<sup>216</sup>

This fictional scenario challenged the reality of professional women in Britain being deterred by a lack of encouragement for "adventurous" career options abroad.<sup>217</sup> The main female protagonist of the novel ultimately uses migration to South Africa as an escape from the drudgery of widowed, interwar Britain, to be reunited with her school friends, both pursuing successful careers. As Regan summarises, "Self-realization is thereby attained not by

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<sup>213</sup> W. Holtby, *The Land of Green Ginger* (London: Virago, 2012), p.11.

<sup>214</sup> L. Regan, *Winifred Holtby's Social Vision* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2015), p.56.

<sup>215</sup> Regan, *Social Vision*, p.60.

<sup>216</sup> Holtby paid particular attention to race relations and trade unionism in South Africa. See Regan, *Social Vision*.

<sup>217</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.221.

securing a husband and rooting oneself in nation and empire, but rather through a free, nomadic existence".<sup>218</sup>

In terms of how this fictional commentary on women's migration by Holtby translated into reality, the SOSBW was aware of the challenge faced by professional women, and paid particular attention to identifying opportunities for women trained in professions such as teachers, secretaries, clerks, nurses and governesses.<sup>219</sup> For this reason, much of its work was focused towards those destinations that offered the type of employment to which independent middle-class women aspired.<sup>220</sup> Middle-class women were able to access opportunities in destinations beyond the white-settler dominions, and SOSBW actively sought out positions further afield as openings in Australia, Canada and New Zealand were dominated by domestic service.<sup>221</sup> The society helped women resettle in countries such as Argentina, Jamaica, Barbados, the Malay States and British protectorates such as Egypt, mostly in positions as headmistresses, teachers and governesses.<sup>222</sup> Deployment of female teachers further extended the influence of migrants in globally exporting British imperial values as discussed above, and beyond the realms of empire.

The organisation received requests from professional women with very clear ideas of what they sought from overseas settlement, and that included stipulating which country they wished to move to, and this did include Canada and Australia. In 1923, B Fuller, a French teacher in an elementary school, wanted to relocate to Canada with her adopted 17 year-old nephew, to enable

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<sup>218</sup> Regan, *Social Vision*, p.62.

<sup>219</sup> *Evening Telegraph*, 19 September 19, 1919, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000563%2f19190919%2f021> [accessed 13/08/2018].

<sup>220</sup> Bush, 'The Twentieth Century'.

<sup>221</sup> SOSBW, 1/SOS/11/1, Notebook of Emigrants, 1902-28.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

him to take up farming.<sup>223</sup> Whether Miss Fuller held ambitions to pursue her career is not documented in the minutes of the SOSBW meeting at which this request was recorded. For women who were able to follow their occupational vocation, the demands of work in the dominions in thinly-populated areas was such that a varied skillset was essential, requiring the merging of professional ability with proficiency in domestic household management. A teacher in Canada, for example, “must ‘do for herself’ or board and take her share of housework”.<sup>224</sup>

However, as far as Canada was concerned, the OSC worked hard to deter women from seeking positions in teaching, advising that they would confront “hardships and difficulties which should be fully realized by any woman who contemplates undertaking this work”.<sup>225</sup> The Saskatchewan government actively sought teachers from Britain immediately after the war, and, while preferring men, both single and married, by the 1920s, the province had more female than male elementary teaching staff.<sup>226</sup> The demand for British teachers dwindled, however, with the provincial government under pressure to protect posts for Canadian teachers as supply met demand.<sup>227</sup>

The studies by Robertson into interwar female workers travelling to Tasmania to support the establishment of a chocolate factory, and Parr who focuses on the movement of textiles workers to Canada, offer insights into

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> *The Common Cause*, Vol. XI No. 546, September 26, 1919, p.294, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0002228%2F19190926%2F003%2F0002&browse=true> [accessed 13/08/2018].

<sup>225</sup> SOSBW 325.2:396 (62) *Handbook for Women who are thinking of Settling Overseas*, Oversea Settlement Department, 1923, p.13.

<sup>226</sup> M. Barber, ‘Nation-Building in Saskatchewan: Teachers from the British Isles in Saskatchewan Rural Schools in the 1920s’, in P. Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds) *Canada and the British World: culture, migration, and identity* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), pp.219-220.

<sup>227</sup> Barber, ‘Nation-Building in Saskatchewan’, p.224.



women as an organised global labour force.<sup>228</sup> This dynamic of female migration positions the driver as industry in empire destinations, seeking out British workers with specific skillsets. The profile of these women sat outside that constructed of surplus, unmarried working factory women, unsuitable for the demands of the dominions. Rather, these women offered skills and experience highly valued within the industry sectors within which they worked.<sup>229</sup> Factory schemes such as those of Penmans hosiery works in Canada were facilitated by the BWEA, certainly until 1919. The workers selected to set up factory systems in the dominions were a discrete cohort, defined by their career-based skill and experience.

### **Conclusion: challenging surplus**

This chapter has explored facets of interwar migration as it related to unmarried working women, within the framing of the Empire Settlement Act. It positions young migrants as a new generation, shaped by their experiences during wartime, and with a set of expectations around personal agency and career ambition. The immediate postwar environment, one in which women's working worlds were disrupted, where underemployment and narrowing of occupational choice became a dominant feature, and which propagated a hostile discourse that repositioned the surplus woman as a threat to societal stability, created ripe conditions in which to promote overseas settlement. Yet, while working women did find themselves having to navigate a world that was, in part, gravitating away from the newly-found experiences of wartime work, in

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<sup>228</sup> Robertson, 'Belles' and J. Parr, 'The Skilled Emigrant and Her Kin: Gender, Culture, and Labour Recruitment', *Canadian Historical Review*, 68:4 (1987) pp.529-551.

<sup>229</sup> Robertson makes the point that this profile of migrant women is largely overlooked in existing literature. Robertson, 'Belles', p.564.

parallel was a highly visible reaction against the status that was being imposed upon them, and vocal politicised views against empire settlement.

Young unmarried women were targeted for overseas migration, but many of those who chose to leave Britain did so with clear ambition, whether as a through-route to marriage, or to seek out careers beyond the domestic service sector that dominated demands from recipient countries. Social class was a factor in determining outcomes for women, with the SOSBW particularly keen to carve out opportunities for middle-class women, while also acknowledging and responding to demands from working-class women who aimed for more than domestic service. Women were also comfortable in occupying a space outside of the empire framework, despite challenges, while for some, their backgrounds placed them at a disadvantage that ultimately led to an unhappy conclusion. Prejudices against young unmarried women were present overseas as well as in Britain, and these also had to be navigated. Migration choices, as they were during wartime, were bound by the influence of family, friends and work colleagues, sustaining long-established trends. While the migration initiatives of the 1920s were considered disappointing in the eyes of their architects, for many women they offered a way of gaining a foothold in a new life, allowing them to position themselves “beyond surplus”.

## **Chapter 5. Domesticity in the Dominions:**

### **Migrant Women, Marriage and Work during the 1920s**

This chapter builds on the two previous through a study of married women and the nature of their lives as migrants during the introduction of empire settlement initiatives of the immediate postwar period. These included the scheme to move former service personnel and their families overseas, a policy that evolved into the Empire Settlement Act of 1922. The schemes were rooted in moves initiated during the conflict, the impact of demobilisation recognised at an early stage, and resettlement discussed. However, while the chapter discusses instances of personal migration under these schemes, it is worth noting that they accounted for a small proportion of overall relocation to empire destinations.<sup>1</sup> I argue that, while accepting that married women, generally, fitted into a gendered migration process within which their agency was reduced by their marital status, many also sought ways to secure a level of self-determination that revealed itself in a range of ways. One of those means, and at the heart of the chapter's discussion, is that many migrant women sought occupation beyond motherhood and marriage and one of the purposes of discussing this is to profile a largely unacknowledged aspect of their lives.

I have previously demonstrated that wartime migration was dominated by women, whether travelling to join their husbands or as widows or unmarried mothers, and that many of these female migrants were accompanied by children.<sup>2</sup> During the interwar period, as analysed in the previous chapter, the

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<sup>1</sup> Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, pp.73-75.

<sup>2</sup> This study does not include unmarried mothers, but they should not be overlooked as a group. For useful discussion on this subject with see Bush, 'The Twentieth Century', p.102.

popular rhetoric around female resettlement was framed around the construct of the unmarried surplus woman. Most of the literature of female migration focuses on single women, largely because they were the target for migration initiatives from the nineteenth century onwards, based on the concern about population imbalance, both at home and overseas. However, while married migrant women, statistically, constituted a lower number than other groups and are, as a result, relatively obscured in migration historiography, a more extensive analysis around their experiences reveals a rich diversity that is worthy of more attention.<sup>3</sup> One of the aims of the chapter, therefore, is to reposition women who migrated in family groups, and to provide a fuller picture of their lives.

Prior to the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, the government's free passage scheme for former service personnel facilitated the migration of just over 82,000 people.<sup>4</sup> Most went to Australia, to rural areas that were the focal point of settlement there, despite the lack of experience and skills amongst those migrating.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, given that this was a scheme directed at former service personnel, it was mostly men that travelled under free passage immediately after the war.<sup>6</sup> While some single women did take advantage of the scheme, such as those discussed in the previous chapter, most women were likely to have been married and travelling in family groups, with children, as demonstrated in the statistics compiled by Plant.<sup>7</sup> The initial scheme of resettlement of former service personnel and their families, that ran until the Empire Settlement Act came into being, saw 86,000 women, men and

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<sup>3</sup> For analysis of the profile of migrant groups, and the positioning of married women within these see Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.212-244.

<sup>4</sup> Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, p.73.

<sup>5</sup> Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, p.74; Richards 'Migrations', p.171-172.

<sup>6</sup> Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, p.74.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

children, leave the UK for Dominion destinations. This accounted for 12 per cent of British emigration from 1919 until 1922.<sup>8</sup> Australia was the preferred destination, with 11,000 women moving there during this period.<sup>9</sup>

As a counterpart to the notion of surplus women, I begin by revisiting the ideal of motherhood, particularly as an instrument of empire, and how married women were situated in postwar society. In the subsequent section I explore the circumstances in which married women migrated, in particular looking at how the relationship with their husbands influenced them, and how the impact of war shaped the decision to leave Britain. In the final section I discuss a range of women through a biographical lens, and compare their responses to settlement, both in terms of their occupational pursuits within family life, and beyond. I argue that motherhood was one component of their lives and that, alongside this, many migrant women navigated themselves through multiple demanding roles, often unpaid, and largely obscured. I also consider those women who engaged with paid work, both out of necessity, and choice, either as a way to mitigate the economic challenges of migrant life, or to seek fulfilment beyond the maternal role. Rutherfordale, in her deft study of missionary women in Canada, demonstrates that, in order to be successful, these women had to, by necessity, operate outside of the parameters of what was considered to be the norm of married life.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, those migrant women who left for overseas farming lives in remote areas of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, faced a similar situation.

### **Marriage, motherhood and empire settlement**

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<sup>8</sup> Richards, *Britannia's Children*, p.243.

<sup>9</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> Rutherfordale, *Women and the White Man's God*.

As discussed in the previous chapter, in relation to single working women, hostility was levied towards the female workforce, and married women faced similar antagonism, finding themselves barred from professions such as teaching, nursing and the civil service.<sup>11</sup> For example, in Aberdeenshire, during 1923, the education authorities progressed the task of “weeding out” married female teachers.<sup>12</sup> Occupational opportunity within women’s married status was therefore actively marginalised. This was reinforced in the popular press, for example by features writer Belinda, who, while challenging the status of surplus women in her newspaper column in 1919, sought the solution within established gender roles, rather than seeking an alternative:

...no woman...if she has a pair of hands and can use them,  
need be “surplus”. Every housewife rearing a useful family and  
seeing to the needs of a useful man is doing her bit, and every  
spinster engaged in useful work is an asset to the country.<sup>13</sup>

While married women were not a specific focus of postwar migration schemes in the way single women were, they did comprise an important part through the targeting of former service personnel and their families. As discussed in Chapter 2, the role of motherhood in British migration was hugely significant. The Victorian ideal of the mother, an elevated position of importance, yet firmly contained within the domestic sphere, was a crucial export to the British colonies during the nineteenth century, a civilising influence within a settler society dominated by men. During that period, female resettlement was driven by a perceived need to modify the “masculine empire”

<sup>11</sup> Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, p.78.

<sup>12</sup> *Aberdeen Press and Journal* 12 January 1923, reproduced at <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000577%2f19230112%2f059> [accessed 13/09/2016].

<sup>13</sup> *Cheltenham Looker-On* ‘A Woman’s Point of View’, September 1919, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0000506%2F19150703%2F002%2F0005&browse=true> [accessed 03/03/2016].

that had resulted from predominantly male colonisation, while also deterring men from forming interracial relationships, providing a pool of prospective white British wives that met the criteria of empire devotees.<sup>14</sup>

Such framing of British migrant women also resulted in strands of stereotyping, developed along lines of social class. Chapter 2 references the antagonism towards unmarried working-class English girls in Canada. A similar stereotypical approach towards young middle-class married English migrant women in South Africa can be found within the writing of Dorothea Fairbridge, specifically in her work *Pamela*, written in 1911.<sup>15</sup> In the following passage, Fairbridge introduces a character, identified only through her husband, en route from England to South Africa:

The bride was one of those pleasant healthy girls whom you know to be English at a glance...Not aggressively English... but unmistakably the output of the little island that moulds them in their thousands – and might do worse work. You would never have paused to ask Mrs Hayes whether she played hockey and golf, skated, danced, or swam...all these accomplishments were apparent at sight, as apparent as her robust good looks...everything that wasn't 'rippin' ' or 'simply lovely' was '*rather* nice' – from Salome to Tarriff Reform.<sup>16</sup>

Mrs Hayes is depicted as a mass-produced commodity of empire, predictable and apolitical. As Mrs Hayes is framed as a prospective actor in the role of white imperial motherhood, so is a parlour maid “unmistakably English” with a “well-trained domestic air”, illustrating the type of working migrant woman

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<sup>14</sup> Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, p.69.

<sup>15</sup> E. Boehmer (ed), *Empire Writing. An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.349.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, *Empire Writing*, p.350.

welcomed in South Africa.<sup>17</sup> Through her fiction, and her constructs of migrant women, Fairbridge contributed towards “forging a white colonial identity within the framework of empire”.<sup>18</sup>

By the interwar years the notion of “imperial motherhood” had crystallised, situated by Hyam as a “fall-out” of the national concern about racial health and fitness exposed as a result of the South African War early in the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> The ideology of motherhood gained even more credence during the 1920s, due to its positioning within the eugenics movement and its associated role as a tool of empire.<sup>20</sup> The role of such societies as the Women’s Guild of Empire placed patriotic imperial concerns at its heart and kept alive the dominant ideology of woman as “child-rearer” and “homemaker” and “imperial propagandist”.<sup>21</sup> The intersectionality of motherhood, empire and eugenics was therefore at the forefront of migration thinking by the interwar years.

The ideology of white dominance across empire gave heightened importance to motherhood as an asset of nationhood.<sup>22</sup> Eugenics also gave further credence to the profile of the ideal migrant woman that had emerged during the nineteenth century, illustrated, for example, in the class prejudices and discrimination against unmarried mothers that informed the “sifting” of women applying to settle in South Africa during the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> This thinking also manifested itself, during the interwar period, through migration controls, although these, in part, equated to formal articulation of long-

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<sup>17</sup> D. Fairbridge, ‘Pamela’ in Boehmer, *Empire Writing*, p.352.

<sup>18</sup> Boehmer *Empire Writing*, p.480.

<sup>19</sup> Hyam, ‘The British Empire’, pp.50-51.

<sup>20</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

<sup>22</sup> Devereux, *Growing a Race*, p.27.

<sup>23</sup> Bush, ‘The Twentieth Century’, p.102.



established prejudicial behaviours, embodied officially in, for example, the “White Australia” policy of 1901.<sup>24</sup>

At the core of eugenicist thinking was the woman’s role as mother, and bearer of what were deemed to be healthy children.<sup>25</sup> This elevated position of women, albeit idealised, was seized on by the first wave of British feminism within which middle-class voices were the most dominant, and placed marriage and motherhood as a critical component of nationalism.<sup>26</sup> The triangulation of a movement of feminism that harnessed the exalted role of motherhood, while positioning women as “instruments of policy”, a popularisation of eugenics and a backlash against young single women, as discussed in the previous chapter, served to provide “imperial motherhood” with an impenetrable foundation by the advent of the 1920s.<sup>27</sup>

When it came to empire settlement, the varying, shifting strands of the women’s movement found common ground through views on the role of women.<sup>28</sup> Ethel Tawse-Jollie, for example, carried into the interwar years her views on women and empire, moulded during the Edwardian era.<sup>29</sup> This helped ensure that the ideology of female migrants as civilising forces within a natural framework of matrimony and motherhood was secured a place. Before the war, Tawse-Jollie was involved with the British Women’s Emigration Association (BWEA) and Royal Colonial Institute, becoming editor of the latter’s journal, *United Empire*, in 1914.<sup>30</sup> By the 1920s, she was the Southern Rhodesia member of the Empire Parliamentarian Association, giving her a

<sup>24</sup> For example, the ‘White Australia’ policy of 1901, discussed in the context of a history of racial tensions and migration in Richards, ‘Migrations’. For how eugenics influenced immigration control see also J. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p.173.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p.13. Taylor Allen argues that this strand of feminism positioned women as ‘instruments of policy’.

<sup>28</sup> D. Lowry, ‘Making Fresh Britains across the Seas’, in I.C. Fletcher, L. E. Nym Mayhall and P. Levine, *Women’s Suffrage in the British Empire. Citizenship, nation and race* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, pp.176-77.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.176.

platform for her views around “the crucial role of British mothers of the race”.<sup>31</sup> However, Tawse-Jollie did not engage with eugenics as part of her argument for white imperial settlement.<sup>32</sup>

Adela Pankhurst, one of the younger daughters of suffrage campaigner Emmeline, had left Britain in 1914 in disillusionment to continue her activism in Australia.<sup>33</sup> During the 1920s Adela became a well-known feminist, political activist and journalist, carving a career for herself alongside her husband.<sup>34</sup> Adela Pankhurst is rarely viewed through the perspective of a British migrant woman, yet, arguably, it was the backdrop of Australia that allowed her to pursue a spectrum of activity that included, ultimately, a full embrace of the imperial ideal through her foundation, in 1929, of the Australian Women’s Guild of Empire, and its aim, amongst others, of assisting “in the development of Australia as part of the British Empire”.<sup>35</sup>

Not all cultural encounters, however, shaped the work and opinions of British migrant women in the same direction. This aspect of settler society in Australia and New Zealand, where women’s suffrage came earlier than in Britain and Canada, and one in which women’s roles were positioned, allowed for a blending of gendered cultures.<sup>36</sup> The collation of biographies through projects such as the Australian Women’s Register and *Te Ara*, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand lives, makes accessible the history of women, including interwar migrants from Britain, giving them profile and promoting the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.177.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.176.

<sup>33</sup> Australian Women’s Register, reproduced at <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0097b.htm> [accessed 26/12/2016].

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed account of Adela Pankhurst’s career in Australia, see D. Mitchell, *The Fighting Pankhursts. A Study in Tenacity* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), pp. 111–120.

<sup>35</sup> Mitchell, *The Fighting Pankhursts*, p.221.

<sup>36</sup> Woollacott, ‘Gender and Sexuality’, p.324.

diversity of their work.<sup>37</sup> In New Zealand, this included women such as Mabel Gunn who opened a maternity hospital in part of her family home at Whatoroa, Lilly Annie Huggan who was active in local Labour Party politics at Korokoro, widowed mother May Furey, who became a political activist lobbying for women's rights, and Mary Ann Ellen who was a founder-member of the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union.<sup>38</sup> These women shared the experience of wartime work in Britain, and in a number of cases the route to their marriage and overseas settlement. Ellen travelled to New Zealand as a single woman in 1920, marrying a year later. Before her marriage, she had gained a degree and worked for an engineering company during the war, in Britain and France. Once married, she built a new career while raising two children, responding to both her new environment and the needs of women within the communities around her, introducing initiatives to support farming women in childbirth and when ill and overworked. Ellen also served on public committees while running a hairdressing business.<sup>39</sup>

This was an environment within which married British migrant women pursued the improvement of lives within the communities in which they settled. These seemingly grassroots and localised occurrences of women's activism were framed by part of a wider movement that yielded such organisations as the British Commonwealth League (BCL), founded in 1925 to connect feminists across the British Empire and Commonwealth, and that evolved from the Australian and New Zealand suffrage movements.<sup>40</sup> The BCL also represented a shifting relationship between Britain and white-settler dominions,

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<sup>37</sup> The Australian Women's Register reproduced at < <http://www.womenaustralia.info/index.html> > [accessed various dates] and Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand reproduced at <https://teara.govt.nz/en> [accessed various dates].

<sup>38</sup> 'Ellen, Mary Ann' reproduced at < [www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4e7/ellen-M-ann](http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4e7/ellen-M-ann) > [accessed 22/12/2016].

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Woollacott, 'Gender and Sexuality', p.326.

releasing those women involved in its activism to operate on a broader platform, as is the case with Margaret MacDonald, discussed later in this chapter.<sup>41</sup> These international movements, connecting women across empire, remained largely situated within a dominant white framework, and yet, during the interwar period, moved those women involved to a stark recognition of the racist imperial project in which they operated.<sup>42</sup> Migrant women who pursued international feminist activism, therefore, such as Margaret Macdonald, while important actors on the stage of British empire settlement, also occupied an ideological space populated with contradictions.

The active feminism of these women was largely shaped by their encounters with settler life, and in particularly the challenges faced by women in rural communities, made evident through the biographies of their lives.<sup>43</sup> These influences on the way their thinking was moulded removed them from both the construct of motherhood as it was presented within the paradigm of empire settlement, and also, through their work, offered ways for other women to do so. However, the migrant women discussed were, notably, educated and mostly middle class, assets they were able to exploit in carving out their lives beyond marriage and motherhood. In a later section I discuss the migrant women who were amongst those suffering the hardships of rural life, and for whom occupation within marriage was an economic necessity.

Examples of the multifaceted nature of married migrant women's lives demonstrate that an intrepid and pioneering approach to settlement was present during the interwar years. Some of the more well-known migrant women became celebrated due to the innovative welfare work within their

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<sup>41</sup> Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth', p.426.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.444.

<sup>43</sup> Te Ara, reproduced at <https://teara.govt.nz/en> [accessed 13/10/2018].

communities. Mabel Gunn is mentioned above. Her work in her immediate community to improve essential facilities for women serves to illustrate practical responses amongst migrants to the demands of their new environments, within a framework of self-driven public service.

The diversity of pursuits was also enabled by the environments in which women found themselves. Another example is naturalist Estelle Thomson, who transferred her passion and knowledge of the natural world of her native Scotland to Queensland after her marriage to Australian Aubrey Thomson, whom she met while he was serving in Europe during the war.<sup>44</sup> Estelle's biographical note in the Australian Women's Register lists her as an "author, journalist, naturalist, photographer and wildflower artist".<sup>45</sup> Taking advantage of the soldier settlement initiative available to returning ex-service personnel in Australia, Estelle and her husband attempted farming, but, as with many settlers on the land during this period, abandoned it in 1923. Mother to four children, Estelle also contributed natural history writing to local newspapers and published an illustrated guide to the wildflowers of Queensland, while developing an expertise in bird species. These women dedicated their lives to vocational pursuits, balancing these against the demands of marriage and motherhood. For some, working alongside these demands became a necessity, perhaps most evident amongst farming families.

**"I would not hold Will back."**<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The Australian Women's Register, biography entry for Estelle Thomson, reproduced at <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/PR00238b.htm> [accessed 08/03/2016].

<sup>45</sup> The Australian Women's Register, biography entry for Estelle Thomson, reproduced at <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/PR00238b.htm> [accessed 08/03/2016].

<sup>46</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to her sister Olive, December 7 1922.

In preceding chapters I have devoted discussion to the promotional and propagandist efforts of parties who shared an interest in the migration of women. I argued in the last chapter that, while much of the empire settlement policy targeted single women, the visual advertising positioned female migrants within marriage and family life. When considering the layers of popular imperialism, including the positioning of motherhood, it is not surprising that the branding and promotion of empire during the immediate postwar period caught the attention of prospective migrant women with families.<sup>47</sup> Olga Wignall, in her autobiography *Chancy Times*, reminisces about the influences that led her mother to make the decision to move to Australia:

Whenever and wherever my mother ventured on market day  
she seemed to be confronted with those banners saying  
'Immigrant wanted for Australia – a land flowing with milk  
and honey there to gain an independence.'<sup>48</sup>

The seemingly effortless transition to migration in this romanticised memoir contrasts with the efforts of recruitment agent Anne Macdonald during the 1920s to encourage the wives and mothers of the Scottish Highlands to consider migration, a job made harder due to the lack of promotional material that took into consideration the needs of married women.<sup>49</sup> The years after the First World War saw recruitment agencies under scrutiny, and Macdonald herself was criticised for her lack of farming knowledge, her insights into

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<sup>47</sup> The range of imperial propaganda deployed during the interwar years is discussed in Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*.

<sup>48</sup> Roe, *Desperate Hopes*, p.192.

<sup>49</sup> M. Harper, 'Ethnicities and Environments: Perceptions of Alienation and Mental Illness Among Scottish and Scandinavian Settlers in North America, c.1870-c.1914', in Harper, *Migration and Mental Health*, p.111.

understanding the requirements and influence of women in the emigration process seemingly disregarded.<sup>50</sup>

Alongside these direct attempts to encourage settlement in the dominions, women with families were urged to buy empire-produced goods, not least through the efforts of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB). The EMB was introduced in 1926, its purpose to stimulate the imperial economy while locating its associated ideology across popular consumer culture.<sup>51</sup> The illustration “The Empire Shop”, commissioned by the EMB in 1927, depicts a well-dressed white woman with her daughter, surrounded by products from around the British Empire, with goods from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, favoured empire destinations for settlers, prominently grouped together alongside the shopping pair.<sup>52</sup> This speculative duo might easily have been transplanted to a New Zealand dairy farm or the Canadian prairies as typical, and desirable family settlers, actors in an imperial world in which the EMB played an advocating part.<sup>53</sup>

However, while women were exposed to empire propaganda, and indeed may have sympathised with the accompanying ideology, more immediate influences were at play when considering migration. For many married women, their engagement with empire settlement was dictated by their marital status. For those migrating in the immediate aftermath of war, this often meant to accompany husbands, whether as war brides, or as wives of British former serving personnel who chose to take advantage of the resettlement

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<sup>50</sup> Harper discusses the dynamics of recruitment agencies in Scotland, with specific reference to Anne Macdonald in M. Harper, ‘Enticing the Emigrant: Canadian Agents in Ireland and Scotland, c.1870-c.1920’, in *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. LXXXIII (215), April 2004, pp. 41-58, pp.55-56.

<sup>51</sup> S. Constantine, ‘“Bringing the Empire Alive”: the Empire Marketing Board and imperial propaganda, 1926-33’, in J.M. Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp.192-231.

<sup>52</sup> Constantine, *Buy & Build*, plate 11.

<sup>53</sup> S. Constantine, ‘“Bringing the Empire Alive”: the Empire Marketing Board and imperial propaganda, 1926-33’, Mackenzie, *Popular Culture*, pp.192-231.

initiative that operated between 1919 and 1922, or later under the Empire Settlement Act. Generally, married women migrating during the interwar years conformed to a well-established pattern of being led by their husbands' decisions.<sup>54</sup>

The celebrated Canberra potter, social worker and feminist Eilean Giblin, for example, travelled to Australia as a "war bride" in 1919, following her marriage to an Australian soldier, yet successfully transferred her activism founded within London political circles to her new environment.<sup>55</sup> Other women who followed their husbands' direction reluctantly gave up work to which they had dedicated much. They included Grace McDougall who held a senior position during the war with the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), but who, after her marriage, witnessed any future with the organisation slip "away from her hold" as she was "destined to follow her husband and his work to Rhodesia".<sup>56</sup>

For Susannah Nicholls, who migrated with her family to Australia in 1923, as assisted migrants under the Empire Settlement Act, there was no question of her failing to support her husband's ambitions.<sup>57</sup> Writing to her sister Olive prior to her departure, Susannah confessed to the likely "many heartaches and tears (in secret) on my part at leaving my "ain Folk" but I would not hold Will back".<sup>58</sup>

The life of Susannah is analysed in more depth in Chapter 6, but for the purposes of this section, there is value in using her voice to illustrate some

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<sup>54</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.223.

<sup>55</sup> The Australian Women's Register, reproduced at <<http://womenustralia.info/biogs/AWE5370b.htm>> [accessed 08/03/2016].

<sup>56</sup> J. Lee, *War Girls. The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry in the First World War* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.236-242.

<sup>57</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127.

<sup>58</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicolls to her sister Olive, December 7, 1922.



detail of settler life in interwar Australia.<sup>59</sup> Both Susannah and her husband, William, worked as teachers, but practical economic need and a hope for better opportunities for their children played a role in their decision to migrate.<sup>60</sup> However, alongside this, Susannah, through her letters, displays a particular sensitivity towards the needs of her husband. What was important to her was that William “will be engaged on work congenial to him”, his plan being to take up fruit farming in Victoria.<sup>61</sup> When the family’s farming ventures failed and the couple had to return to teaching to support the family, Susannah was “very sorry for poor old Will. He has longed for an open air life.”<sup>62</sup>

William Nicholls had enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery in 1915 and served in France until he was demobilised in 1919, during which time Susannah’s health broke down. Many migrant families had experience of war, and its impact, and any link to resettlement, is worth consideration. This aspect is not well covered in the historiography of interwar empire settlement, but it is useful to explore how it played out at a personal level. The government resettlement scheme rejected most applications, supporting only 12 per cent of migration to empire destinations between 1919 and 1922. Outward movement under the Empire Settlement Act, between 1923 and 1933, accounted for 36 per cent.<sup>63</sup> This left most prospective migrants dependent on other routes. For former service personnel and their families arriving in Canada after the war, outside of the control and restrictions of the free passage scheme, disability brought about by military action was common, including physical injury and

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<sup>59</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127.

<sup>60</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Susannah discusses her children’s futures and the pressure of wage reductions. Letter from Susannah Nicolls to her sister Olive, December 7, 1922

<sup>61</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicolls to her sister Olive, December 7, 1922; Letter from Susannah Nicolls to her sister Olive, December 19, 1922.

<sup>62</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to ‘Dearest Meopham Ones’, 12.5.24.

<sup>63</sup> The Government received 133,301 applications between 1919 and 1922, for the migration of nearly 270,000 individuals. Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, p.73.

neurasthenia.<sup>64</sup> The latter condition was a symptom of shell shock, which particularly affected relationships in the postwar landscape.<sup>65</sup> It is worth raising the question of a connection between the debilitating effects of war and a decision to settle overseas, as well as the ensuing impact on family settlement. The war highlighted the necessity of addressing its emotional impact, but also exposed the difficulties men had in the ensuing years in dealing with the personal impact of traumatic events.<sup>66</sup>

The SOSBW acknowledged the existence of disability amongst families whom they helped to migrate, positioning wives in employment to mitigate the impact of fathers with reduced ability to work. For example, in 1923, the organisation arranged the overseas settlement to Queensland, Australia of the Warren family.<sup>67</sup> Captain William Warren emigrated with his wife Doreen and five children in 1923, listed on the passenger list of the ship *Esperance Bay* as a civil servant.<sup>68</sup> Doreen Warren is referred to on the passenger list as “wife” and, also in the records of the SOSBW as “wife (quite young)”.<sup>69</sup> The notes recorded by SOSBW reveal a fuller picture of the family’s situation. Captain William Warren, at the time of emigrating had “50% disability” as a result of injury sustained during the First World War.<sup>70</sup> The family was moving to Queensland to join another former soldier, D L Hancock, who had moved to Australia to take up farming.<sup>71</sup> The family had been refused assisted passage

<sup>64</sup> Fedorowich, ‘British ex-Servicemen’, p.62.

<sup>65</sup> Grogan, *Shell Shocked Britain*, p.11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.64.

<sup>67</sup> SOSBW 1/SOS/11/1 Emigrant Notebook, 1902-1928.

<sup>68</sup> BT27/1024 Passenger List, *Esperance Bay*, 18 December 1923, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2FBT27%2F1024%2F00%2F0073%2FP%2F0002F&parentid=TNA%2FBT27%2F1024000073%2F00055> [accessed 26/10/2018].

<sup>69</sup> BT27/1024 Passenger List, *Esperance Bay*, London to Australia, 18 December 1923, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2FBT27%2F1024%2F00%2F0073%2FP%2F0002F&parentid=TNA%2FBT27%2F1024000073%2F00055> Mrs Warren was 23, and William Warren 45, the two elder children, aged 18 and 15, likely to have been from a former marriage, [accessed 26/10/2018] and SOSBW 1/SOS/11/1 Canada Australia, p.119.

<sup>70</sup> SOSBW 1/SOS/11/1 Emigrant Notebook, 1902-1928.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

due to William Warren's disability, and was self-financing, but with a clear role for Doreen Warren "to cook and wash for them all in the house Mr Hancock says he is building".<sup>72</sup> This scenario opens up questions about the nature of migration in the aftermath of war, for women and men, but what becomes clear is the responsibility shouldered by wives and mothers, as migrants, supporting families and husbands directly affected by conflict.

Accepting the argument that many veterans felt displaced after the war provides a plausible link between the emotional impact of the conflict and overseas settlement. Certainly, the events of the war touched migrating families. In March 1920, the Catley family sailed to Canada on board Canadian Pacific ship *Scotian*, the party consisting of Elaine, Sidney, their two year-old son John Lawrence and Elaine's younger brother, eight year-old Geoffrey.<sup>73</sup> Sidney Catley had served in the Army Service Corps as a clerk during the war.<sup>74</sup> A stock-keeper working for the Fine Arts Publishing Company in London prior to his war service, he and Elaine Clarke married in Twickenham in December 1915.<sup>75</sup>

Elaine Catley's diary for the year 1920 spans the period just prior to the family's departure for Canada, in March of that year, and the subsequent

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> BT27/929, Passenger List, SS *Scotian*, 13 March 1920, Liverpool to New Brunswick, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F0929%2F00%2F0059%2FP%2F0006F&parentid=TNA%2F0929000059%2F00232>> [accessed 23/09/2018]. For Catley family history see <[http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk/liverpool.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/Glenbow M-8821-2-1](http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk/liverpool.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/Glenbow-M-8821-2-1)> [accessed September 23, 2018].

Elaine's brother Geoffrey is listed on the Census for England and Wales, 1911, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F06842%2F0177&parentid=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F06842%2F0177%2F3>> [accessed 23/09/2018].

<sup>74</sup> Short Service Attestation of Sidney Charles William Catley, 4 March 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f007285280%2f00233&parentid=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f7285280%2f17%2f232>> [accessed 23/09/2018].

<sup>75</sup> Letter of Reference for Sidney Catley from the Secretary of the Fine Arts Publishing Company to the Recruiting Officer, Ealing, February 1<sup>st</sup> 1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f007285280%2f00239&parentid=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f7285280%2f17%2f232>> [accessed 23/09/2018]. Army Marriage form, Sidney Catley and Elaine Clarke, 29.12.1915, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f007285280%2f00238&parentid=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f7285280%2f17%2f232>> [accessed 23/09/2018].

months of their settling into their new life in Calgary, Alberta.<sup>76</sup> Her planning, recorded in the diary, is interspersed with the lingering impact of war, the family attending a military funeral for a friend or relative called Gilbert, whose grave Elaine wrote about visiting before her departure to Canada.<sup>77</sup> Catley also published six books of poetry. The sentiment of her poem “Canada Calling” recalls the circumstances in which her family left England, in the wake of the First World War. Leaving the “war-torn lands” of Europe to find a country that can “build a new world order” suggests something of the disruption that families, including Catley’s, suffered as a result of the conflict.<sup>78</sup>

Physical war injuries also impacted on the trajectory of family life amongst British migrants. Married couple Isabel and Samuel “Ben” Haigh left Britain for New Zealand in 1920 after his discharge from the army the previous year.<sup>79</sup> Samuel Haigh had been shot in the leg during the war and he suffered from the long-term respiratory effects of trench warfare.<sup>80</sup> At the time of their emigration, Isabel was the main breadwinner as a teacher, her husband unable to secure work after the war.<sup>81</sup> In New Zealand, Isabel and Samuel adopted a son and lived on a farm from which she travelled, by train and horse, to teach at a small rural school.<sup>82</sup> Later, Isabel moved away from the family farm to teach in Auckland, visiting her family once a month until the farm was sold and her husband and son moved to be with her in the city.<sup>83</sup> Samuel Haigh struggled with asthma while living in the city and the family decided to

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<sup>76</sup> Elaine Catley’s diary is in the collections of Glenbow Museum, reproduced at <http://www.glenbow.org/collections/search/findingaids/archhtm/extras/catley/m-8821-2.pdf> [accessed 21/09/2018].

<sup>77</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>78</sup> E.M. Catley, *Canada Calling*.

<sup>79</sup> Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives & Library 515.SHA/PM. Shaw and Shaw, ‘“Where do all the flies go...?”’.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p.23.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.22.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p.55.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.55.

move back to the country to run a poultry farm during the early 1930s, at which time Isabel gave up her teaching job.<sup>84</sup>

The Haighs were able to navigate their way through their life as migrants, deploying their respective skills to arrive at a comfortable position. The role of Isabel Haigh in their success, that of working mother, living at times away from home, is resonant of missionary women in nineteenth-century Canada, who, by necessity, operated outside of the parameters of what was considered to be the norm of married life.<sup>85</sup> The working wife and mother was, therefore, critical to the success of many migrant families, but is often hard to locate in the literature. The next section explores further the nature of their work, while also discussing the type of occupation that married women pursued that, whether by choice or through economic necessity, added to the diversity, and challenges, of their lives.

### **Beyond motherhood: lives of married migrant women**

The next section looks at case studies of British women who migrated, with their husbands, to empire destinations during the 1920s. There are two specific themes discussed. Building on the discussion of the previous chapter, the first theme explores the breadth of occupation amongst migrant women. For the purposes of this discussion I make no distinction between paid and unpaid work, but situate all activity within the range of these women's daily lives. I introduce the section with a discussion about women's roles in the practical process of migration, including preparations and settling in. In order to provide a sense of the differences amongst women, I then introduce some examples to demonstrate that, while the status of migrant was shared, their

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.56.

<sup>85</sup> Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*.

experiences varied. Using farming families as an example, I then argue that women, particularly in rural areas, found themselves tested in the range of work with which they were confronted, and how that could create challenges and difficulties. This existence I compare to an urban-based woman, Elaine Catley, introduced above, who was able to extend a relatively comfortable existence of marriage and motherhood into a literary career. I also explore relationships with motherhood and domesticity, and to what extent this contributed to fulfilling the imperial ideal discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Leaving and settling**

Looking at the experiences of Catley and Nicholls, the work they undertook as part of the preparations to migrate reveals common ground. As part of their family management role, both women were centrally involved in enabling the resettlement process. This was an under-acknowledged function, with far more emphasis on the male role as breadwinner, often travelling ahead, and yet women were also critical in ensuring a successful move.<sup>86</sup> For example, Catley's diary entries include detail about arranging passport photos and applications, responding to enquires about furniture for sale, arranging trunks and packing boxes, and taking children for vaccinations.<sup>87</sup> There were almost daily activities for Elaine Catley relating to the family's move between 1 January and 13 March 1920, the date of their departure. Similarly, Susannah Nicholls, in her letters to her sister, talks about arranging the sale of furniture and the finances relating to the family's move, as well as managing house viewings amongst prospective buyers.<sup>88</sup> Neither was this specific to the interwar period, as Errington demonstrates in discussing the preparatory work

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<sup>86</sup> Harper & Constantine. *Migration and Empire*, p.217.

<sup>87</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>88</sup> Letters Nicholls to Olive Rix Dec 7/19/25 1922.

undertaken by one woman migrating with her children in the 1820s, following her husband who had travelled in advance, and who “organized the sale of household items, packed boxes and supplementary food for the voyage, and negotiated the family’s passage”.<sup>89</sup> This routine of tasks mirrored that of Catley and Nicholls a century later, even including the food preparation, with Elaine making a cake just prior to departure.<sup>90</sup>

The work of women continued on arrival, as they were confronted with unfamiliar environments within which to set up home. The work involved in settling in a new city becomes apparent through Elaine’s diary entries. While looking after her small son, for example, she was busy trying to get lighting into their new home, and battling with snowy weather.<sup>91</sup> In addition, both Elaine and Susannah moved house within a year of arriving in their respective new countries. The Catleys moved into a new home on 13 July 1920, four months after arriving in Calgary, while the Nicholls relocated three times between 1923 and 1927, revealing another aspect of settlement life that women manoeuvred through. As Elaine’s diary reveals the routine of her first year in Canada, what emerges is a woman dedicated to home management, pursuing daily routine tasks such as washing and ironing, and settling the family into a new home a few months after arrival.<sup>92</sup> There is little hint within the diary of Elaine’s parallel pursuit, that of writing. There are, however, regular mentions of visits to the library, indicating a strong literary interest, and a passing reference that she was ‘busy ironing, writing etc.’<sup>93</sup> While raising four children, she also pursued a literary career that led to the publication of numerous volumes of poetry.

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<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Jane Errington “‘Information Wanted’. Women emigrants in a Transatlantic World’, in Buckner and Douglas Francis, *British World*, p.16.

<sup>90</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

Elaine, however, was unlikely to have been forced to work through poverty, as other married women were. For self-employed women in New Brunswick in the first half of the twentieth century, for example, entrepreneurship was often necessitated through circumstances such as divorce and widowhood, as well as need within marriage.<sup>94</sup> For women such as these, owning and operating a business was far from emancipatory, but essential to support their families. For Elaine, her writing occupation, while not economically driven, likely liberated her from the routine of married life, albeit one of privilege. Her diary reveals a comfortable life of social visits with a close network of family and friends, visits to shops and the cinema, and afternoons spent in the garden listening to the gramophone.<sup>95</sup> Elaine's urban pursuits contrasted significantly with those of her rural-based counterparts, as illustrated in the following section.

### **The farmer *needs* a wife**

This section explores the nature of farming life amongst British migrant families, with particular reference to the role women played. The examples used include that of the Nicholls family, who migrated to Australia in 1923 under the Empire Settlement Act, the Haigh family who relocated to New Zealand in 1919, and the Clark family who moved to Canada in 1926. British migrants had long been advantaged in their settlement of land, legislation through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries enabling smaller scale farm holdings to be established.<sup>96</sup> Susannah Nicholls discussed in one letter to her sister how "The Closer Settlement Act provides for 40 acre holdings...and the Australian Agricultural Bank advance up to £500 for house, fencing, stock

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<sup>94</sup> Buddle, *Business of Women*.

<sup>95</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>96</sup> R. Waterhouse, 'Settling the Land', in D.M. Schreuder and S. Ward, *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.54-77, p.65.



etc.”<sup>97</sup> However, in the immediate interwar period, there was increasing criticism that the plots of land available were insufficient to farm economically, confirmed in a Victorian Royal Commission report in 1925.<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, the model on which land settlement had been historically based, with significant dependency on the family unit, had begun to disintegrate by the 1920s, as education policy in countries such as Australia shifted to ensure children stayed in school longer, removing a traditional labour source.<sup>99</sup> In many areas of farming, the ability to deploy family labour made ventures sustainable. For example, the work of women and children in dairying was essential, saving labour costs, and quite often the reason why men chose this type of farming.<sup>100</sup> Self-sufficiency was a valuable aspect of farming life, and poultry farming was a staple activity certainly on most farms in Victoria, Australia.<sup>101</sup> Alongside their farming work, women’s domestic skills were also crucial in keeping family costs down.<sup>102</sup> Susannah Nicholls, writing from her family farm in Victoria to her sister in England, presented the challenges she faced:

“We have never been so short of money in our married lives...  
sometimes it seems the day is done & I haven’t had a minute  
to spare. I have lots of cooking – the economical dishes are  
the most trouble & 5 of us to do for all the meals at home,  
5 of us to wash & mend for & our clothes have reached  
the stage of wanting so much mending – no money to buy new.”<sup>103</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Susannah Nicholls to Olive Rix, December 7 1922.

<sup>98</sup> R. Waterhouse, ‘Settling the Land’, in D.M. Schreuder and S. Ward, *Australia’s Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.54-77, p.69.

<sup>99</sup> M. Lake, *The Limits of Hope: soldier settlement in Victoria, 1915-38* (Melbourne and New York: Melbourne University Press, 1987), p.144. Lake looks at land settlement amongst returning Australian soldiers, but provides a useful view into life as a farming family that can be equally applied to migrant farming families.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p.14.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p.148.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p.148.

<sup>103</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Susannah Nicholls to ‘Dearest Meopham Ones’, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1924.

Despite that by the 1920s, farmers' wives were reacting against a sense of exploitation, many also accepted their position in the interests of the family economy.<sup>104</sup> The "double workload" of farming women's lives became an acute issue in the 1920s in Australia, and it was into this world that many British female migrants and their families entered.<sup>105</sup>

The imperial existence of British women in their domestic settings in the "white dominions" is very different to that of their counterparts in South Africa and India, for example. The relationship between them and colonised populations is far less evident, and it is more through their working lives that interaction beyond the sphere of their settler communities occurred, such as teaching in remote areas of Canada. The nature of migrant women's domesticity, therefore, especially in remote areas, came to mirror lives of settlers of former generations, often defined by isolation, hardship, and hard work. This was captured, for example, in the genre of *Bulletin* writers based in Sydney during the 1890s.<sup>106</sup> Barbara Baynton became noted for her female-centric depiction of bush life, "malevolent and crippling rather than heroic and sustaining", with much of her work being based on her own life.<sup>107</sup> Baynton's peer, Henry Lawson, also offered fiction that featured women, albeit rarely, and usually located in terms of their relationship to men, as in *The Drover's Wife*.<sup>108</sup> The eponymous character in the latter work fights against nature, in the shape of a venomous snake in the family's makeshift home, to protect her children as they sleep:

The kitchen has no floor – or, rather, an earthen one...

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<sup>104</sup> Lake, *The Limits of Hope*, p.16.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p.174.

<sup>106</sup> Boehmer, *Empire Writing*, p.172.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p.472.

<sup>108</sup> S. Barrett, 'No Place for a Woman?' Barbara Baynton's Bush Studies, *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 40 (2003), pp.85-96.

There is a large, roughly made table in the centre of the place.

She brings the children in and makes them get on this table...

and sits down beside it to watch all night.<sup>109</sup>

While the above is a dramatic example, migrant women did move into dangerous environments, which they shared with their Australian counterparts. These experiences, shared amongst women, defined the existence that many settlers adopted, the characteristics of which extended into the interwar years, and across empire destinations. English migrant Susannah Nicholls wrote to her relatives in England of the devastation caused during a season of bush fires:

You have by now heard of the terrible bush fires which have been raging round the districts. There has been much loss of life, homes burnt, property and stock ruined. Thank God we are still safe...My drive to school is now through burnt and blackened bush.<sup>110</sup>

For those women who followed their husbands into farming life, whether to Australia, New Zealand or Canada, the challenges quickly became apparent. The failure of farming ventures during this period achieved notoriety due to the “unhappy fate” of many migrants who attempted it.<sup>111</sup> Susannah Nicholls and her family were faced with a failed attempt at farming on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, being forced to give up after just over a year. “It’s no use to go on struggling” she wrote to her sister, “we must resign ourselves to admit failure”.<sup>112</sup> The failure of the Nicholls’ farming venture was

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<sup>109</sup> Boehmer, *Empire Writing*, p.177.

<sup>110</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to ‘Dearest Meopham ones’, 17.2.26.

<sup>111</sup> Richards, ‘Migrations’, p.171.

<sup>112</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to ‘Dearest Meopham ones’, 15.5.24.

not atypical, and the attraction of an outdoor life for many ended the same way, especially in Victoria.<sup>113</sup>

The extent of British migrant women's work within farming families was routinely overlooked. In Canada, officialdom obscured married women's farm work, as census rules dictated that they be listed as "farmer's wife" until the mid-twentieth century, formally denying their full contribution to the family economy.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, in Australia, women's farm work was ignored, with officials in the late nineteenth century making a deliberate decision not to document women's agricultural labours.<sup>115</sup> By the 1920s, this jarred against women's movements that had begun to redefine the notion of domesticity as a role that involved far more than responding to demands of husband and children.<sup>116</sup> As demonstrated above through the example of the Haighs, the challenges of yielding a healthy family economy within farming activity led to unconventional family models.

The work involved in setting up home in rural areas is further demonstrated by the Clark family, who travelled from Liverpool to Canada in 1926.<sup>117</sup> The family, of Northwich, Cheshire, left Liverpool for Canada in May 1927.<sup>118</sup> Florence Clark travelled with her husband, Ernest, and four children. In 1911, Ernest and Florence were living with her parents in Northwich, he working as a fitter's labourer in a chemical works.<sup>119</sup> Moving into shipbuilding

<sup>113</sup> Richards, 'Migrations', p.171.

<sup>114</sup> Buddle, *Business of Women*, p.66.

<sup>115</sup> Lake, *The Limits of Hope*, p.179.

<sup>116</sup> C. Beaumont, *Housewives and citizens: Domesticity and the women's movement in England, 1928–64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> DX/1415, Clark Family collection.

<sup>118</sup> BT27/1155, Passenger List, SS *Montclare*, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1927, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F1155%2F00%2F0009%2FP%2F0010F&parentid=TNA%2F115500009%2F00249> [accessed 25/09/2018].

<sup>119</sup> Census for England and Wales, 1911, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2352/rq14\\_21676\\_0581\\_03?pid=5139427&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db%3D1911England%26h%3D5139427%26indiv%3Dtry%26o\\_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D1114&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2352/rq14_21676_0581_03?pid=5139427&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db%3D1911England%26h%3D5139427%26indiv%3Dtry%26o_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D1114&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true) [accessed 24/09/2018].

during the war after being discharged in 1918 due to impaired vision, Ernest would have been eligible to settle overseas with his family under the soldier settlement scheme, but chose to move overseas much later in the decade.<sup>120</sup> Ernest was typical of many men migrating to take up farming, with experience located in heavy industry rather than from the agricultural sector, demonstrated by the fact that, of 1,382 successful applications to the scheme in three months of 1921, only 136 had farming experience.<sup>121</sup> Less attention in the literature is given to the precarious work involved on the part of women in setting up rural households and managing families alongside their farm work, including supervising children's tasks which included, in the Clark family's case, looking after "the hens pigs chickens feeding calfs (sic) and chopping sticks and fetching firewood".<sup>122</sup>

It is clear from John Clark's memoir that his mother struggled to support the family within the available income, in a challenging environment:

We didn't have any beds, only straw mattress's (sic) filled with straw and laid on the floor

...Through all the mishaps and troubles my Mother, Bless her,

got on with the job to establish the house with the very little income plus the fact she had six hungry mouths to feed (sic)

but she was very good at making do...

<sup>120</sup> British Army WWI Pension Records 1914-1920 for Ernest Clark, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1114/miuk1914a\\_083847-01137?pid=245183&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc=3Dari78%26\\_phstart=3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DErnest%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3DClark%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msypn\\_ft%3DNorthwich.%2520Cheshire.%2520England%26msypn%3D82489%26msbdy%3D1888%26catbu%3D1114%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D4&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=ari78&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageId=miuk1914a\\_083847-01137](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1114/miuk1914a_083847-01137?pid=245183&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=3Dari78%26_phstart=3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DErnest%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DClark%26gsln_x%3D0%26msypn_ft%3DNorthwich.%2520Cheshire.%2520England%26msypn%3D82489%26msbdy%3D1888%26catbu%3D1114%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D4&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ari78&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageId=miuk1914a_083847-01137) [accessed 25/09/2018].

<sup>121</sup> Fedorowich, 'British ex-servicemen', pp.63-64.

<sup>122</sup> Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool), DX/1415, Clark family collection. Clark 'To Canada and Back', p.9.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p.3.



**Figure 5.1** “1926 Caraboo River Mum & Dad”. Florence and Ernest Clark on the family farm at Caribou River, Pictou County, Nova Scotia.



**Figure 5.2** “1926 Canada Caraboo River Mum & Bertha”. Florence Clark with her daughter Bertha on the family farm at Caribou River, Pictou County, Nova Scotia.<sup>124</sup>

The Clark family ultimately made the decision to leave their farming life in Canada and to return to England.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool), DX/1415, Clark family collection.

<sup>125</sup> Clark ‘To Canada and Back’.

Some families who gave up farming chose to stay in their adopted country, including the Nicholls. The letters from Susannah Nicholls to her sister, Olive, in England reveal how the family navigated through the challenges of settler life.<sup>126</sup> It is apparent that Susannah's life became composed of complex layers of work as the family endeavoured to make a success of their resettlement. Having failed to secure land through the government settlement scheme, Susannah's husband, William, obtained a teaching position but yearned to try farming, despite the challenges.<sup>127</sup> Eventually the couple moved with their two children, and William's uncle, to a farm at Pearcedale, Victoria.<sup>128</sup> However, the venture quickly failed, situating the family as one of the many statistics of unsuccessful farming attempts.<sup>129</sup> Susannah Nicholls expressed relief at turning their backs on farming, both for reasons of financial security, "Personally, I am jolly glad not to be dependent on the Bounties of nature" and due to the relentless workload:

This is a lovely place & we want to stay here but to depend on  
it means hard labour early & late – 365 days a year...<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> For example, the Australian soldier settlement project saw a high rate of abandonment, and it was estimated that, by 1933, most who were still farming were insolvent. See R. Waterhouse, 'Settling the Land', in D.M. Schreuder and S. Ward *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.69.

<sup>130</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to 'Dearest Meopham ones', 12.5.24.





**Figure 5.3** The Nicholls Family, Australia c.1923-6, (l-r) John, Maureen, Susannah, Uncle John Spence.<sup>131</sup>

The Nicholls family continued to live at Pearcedale, and the decision to give up farming suited Susannah, although the work for her beyond domesticity did not end. Family income had still to be sourced, and the continuing struggles of multiple roles that Susannah Nicholls faced, maintaining a teaching job while managing family life, including looking after William's uncle, who suffered from serious health problems, is presented through her letters:

I'm not going to write a long letter because I have so very little time now...Uncle helps me all he can, but I have to be out of the house by...12.45. & I have often to leave jobs undone to finish when I come home,

<sup>131</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127. Photograph of The Nicholls Family, Australia c.1924-5.



but that 23/- a week is so useful that I want to earn it  
as long as I can.<sup>132</sup>

Challenges faced by migrant families were not always financial. Homesickness was common, as evidenced through letters, and felt by men as well as women.<sup>133</sup> However, for women who left close family behind in order to accompany their husbands overseas, this sense of separation could be acute, even before leaving. On preparing for her departure, Susannah wrote to her sister and brother-in-law that “sometimes my heart seems to turn to water in my bosom at the thought of leaving my own flesh and blood”.<sup>134</sup> Susannah’s homesickness was typical of the isolation often felt by women, in her case tinged with resentment also, having faced the division of her close family, while her husband’s immediate family unit was held intact through the migration process: “In taking Uncle, Will takes all & suffers no parting & now dear ones – Goodbye”.<sup>135</sup>

The letters of Susannah Nicholls contain a constant yearning for home, and an unrelenting hope that her sister might join her in Australia:

Any way – when you all come to Australia we can meet you  
at Melbourne & put tents up for you on our estate, feed you  
on Apples pork, eggs & honey, cabbages, tomatoes etc.etc.  
& get a job for Gay.....<sup>136</sup>

For Florence Clark, the death of her mother in England during the family’s early years in Canada, and a sister and ailing father back home

<sup>132</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to ‘My Dearest Meopham ones’, 17.2.26.

<sup>133</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.71.

<sup>134</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Gay & Ol, 25 December 1922.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. For a discussion on how homesickness affected women specifically see Harper & Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.317-18.

<sup>136</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to ‘Dearest Ones at Meopham’, 7.10.23.

prompted an eventual, and permanent return to Britain in 1934.<sup>137</sup> A death in the family was a common reason for return migration, but Florence also experienced hardships working on a remote farm in Canada where in winter the house was cut off.<sup>138</sup> British migrants were ill-prepared for the harsh environments that they encountered, the reality of rural dominion life deliberately omitted from promotional material.<sup>139</sup> It is evident from John Clark's journal that Florence failed to settle in Canada, caught between family demands from different directions. Seemingly, it took Florence a few years to persuade her husband to agree to the return, during which time she also received pressure from her father to go back to England.<sup>140</sup>

Those women who brought prior farming experience to their settler lives had more chance of success. Mabel Hedditch fulfilled the ambition outlined by Simm and Pughe-Jones, discussed in the previous chapter, of former land army women building a farming career in Australia. Her success was achieved within marriage, and as a result of her background and training, as well as her wartime work experience.<sup>141</sup> Having grown up on a farm in England, and completing a cheese-making course at the Country Dairy School in Bristol just prior to the outbreak of war, Mabel was well positioned for a successful farming life overseas when she met and married Australian soldier Norman Hedditch, also from an agricultural background. While raising seven children, Mabel also

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<sup>137</sup> Clark 'To Canada and Back'.

<sup>138</sup> M. Wyman, 'Emigrants returning: the evolution of a tradition', in M. Harper *Emigrant Homecomings. The return movement of emigrants 1600-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.22.

<sup>139</sup> For example, Harper notes that during the 1890s, during a migration recruitment drive to the Canadian prairies, snow-covered scenes were not allowed to be shown on promotional posters. Harper, 'Ethnicities and Environments: Perceptions of Alienation and Mental Illness Among Scottish and Scandinavian Settlers in North America, c.1870-c.1914' in Harper, *Migration and Mental Health*, p.103.

<sup>140</sup> Clark 'To Canada and Back', p.14.

<sup>141</sup> The Australian Women's Register, reproduced at < <https://www.womenaustralia.info/> [accessed 26/12/2016].

managed the farm, allowing her husband to pursue additional work as a livestock agent, especially essential during periods of economic hardship.<sup>142</sup>

It was within the sphere of farming that the work of single and married migrant women overlapped, as British domestics were seen as part of the solution, revealing a relationship between single migrants and settler wives and mothers who shared an environment within which their lives became intertwined.<sup>143</sup> Within Australia, in response to the Empire Settlement Act, the Domestic Immigration Scheme, set up by a group of women including Honorary Secretary, Beatrice MacDonald, worked to promote the immigration of British domestics to country areas of New South Wales.<sup>144</sup> The purpose of the scheme was to alleviate the lives of mothers in remote farming areas.<sup>145</sup> The hardships that many married women faced working on farms became apparent in a letter to Beatrice MacDonald from a farming wife, Mrs Beryl Fisher.<sup>146</sup> In this, she described the work of women on the land:

The Farmer is not able to make a success of farming without  
a wife...the woman generally works much harder than the man  
...Her hours are much longer if she is doing her own work,  
and never ending if she has a little family to care for.<sup>147</sup>

The issues faced by women in farming families prevailed during the interwar years, but were increasingly addressed by a group of women, including from Britain, such as those discussed above, that began to acknowledge and

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> This relationship dynamic is not explored any further in this study, but is worthy of future consideration.

<sup>144</sup> NAA: A458, A154/14, Minutes of the Executive Council of the Domestic Immigration Society, 3 September 1923 and accompanying document 'Domestic Help for the Country Women', reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=86228> and <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=86228> [accessed 25/09/2018].

<sup>145</sup> This included established Australian-born farming families as well as new arrivals.

<sup>146</sup> NAA: A458, A154/14. Letter to Mrs B MacDonald from Mrs Beryl Fisher, April 3<sup>rd</sup>/23, reproduced at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=86228> [accessed 10/09/2018].

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

address the hardships faced, and which introduced yet another layer of connection between migrant women.

### **Mothers of empire?**

The idea of motherhood and domesticity as a tool in the empire settlement project and to what extent migrant women of the interwar period engaged with this notion is questioned in the next section. I contrast the life of Elaine Catley with that of Margaret Macpherson, a British migrant to New Zealand.<sup>148</sup> Both women were married, fulfilled the role of mother, yet responded very differently to these roles. They both, however, used writing as a medium. During the nineteenth century, female settlers who migrated and got married fulfilled the role of racial “boundary markers” using their domestic space to position their whiteness through imported routines and rituals such as letter-writing and tea-drinking and the introduction of specific styles of dress and interior design.<sup>149</sup> By the time both Elaine Catley and Margaret Macpherson migrated, to Canada and New Zealand respectively, they were entering worlds already heavily demarcated, and yet the transfer of English practices prevailed. Elaine Catley relocated to Canada within the framework of the Empire Settlement Act and to a city that became a magnet for British migrants.<sup>150</sup> The Catley family was part of a movement of British migrants gravitating towards cities and white-collar jobs, where housing was superior and the seasonal work of rural areas was avoidable.<sup>151</sup> The family migrated to Canada in 1920 and settled in Calgary, Alberta. Sidney Catley was an

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<sup>148</sup> Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, ‘Margaret Macpherson’, reproduced at <https://teara.govt.nz/en> [accessed 26/12/2016].

<sup>149</sup> Hall ‘Of Gender and Empire’, p.70.

<sup>150</sup> By 1961, nearly 80% of British migrants lived in the cities of Calgary, Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Toronto and Montreal, Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.16.

<sup>151</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p.16.

accountant, without work when the family arrived in Calgary, but soon located employment in local businesses.<sup>152</sup>

Elaine Catley's diary covers the phase of the family's migration and first year as settlers in Calgary, Alberta.<sup>153</sup> The Catley family moved into an established social network in Calgary, with a number of families who had previously settled there discussed regularly by Elaine.<sup>154</sup> She was an avid correspondent, documenting all letters received and sent in her diary, securing her world within a framework of extended British family and friends that straddled both Britain and Canada. Such activity formed one component of the Catleys' transfer of their British life to the Canadian prairies. Her diary entries before and after the family migration are mostly distinguishable through descriptions of the weather. Otherwise, the routine of her life involving social visits, shopping, churchgoing, homemaking and dealing with children's illnesses are constant across England and Canada.

Elaine's family was located at the heart of her activity, both before and after migrating. Prior to her departure, much reference was made to "34", likely her family home before marriage, and where her father lived in 1920.<sup>155</sup> Her father and brothers received regular mentions, and this closeness extended into the family's migration activity. The Catleys formed part of a network of family migration, fitting neatly into established trends discussed in the two previous chapters. Elaine's younger brother Horace left England for Canada in

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<sup>152</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. Elaine wrote a lot about 'Claude and Maiz' and 'Charles and Nellie' whom she saw on a regular basis throughout 1920. Charles was possibly an elder brother, as he seemed to be linked to her other brother, Horace.

<sup>155</sup> Elaine Catley's address at the time of her marriage was 34 Grimwood Road, Twickenham, Middlesex. Army Marriage form, Sidney Catley and Elaine Clarke, 29.12.1915, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f007285280%2f00238&parentid=gbm%2fwo363-4%2f7285280%2f17%2f232> [accessed 23/09/2018].

early 1920, she receiving news of his arrival at St John's, Newfoundland on 30 January, and meeting up with him in Calgary in March of the same year.<sup>156</sup>

This activity also opened up a professional network for Elaine in addition to the social and family connections evident in her diary. For example, not long after her arrival in Calgary in 1921, Elaine joined the city's branch of the Canadian Authors' Association, as one of its earliest members.<sup>157 158</sup> In 1925 Elaine founded the Poetry Group of the organisation, and also belonged to the Canadian Women's Press Club.<sup>159</sup> This was founded in 1904 and by 1920 had 277 members, and would have given Elaine access to leading female writers and journalists who shared wide-ranging views.<sup>160</sup> The Calgary branch opened in 1912, particularly noted for its activism in supporting women's issues, including unemployment.<sup>161</sup> These connections would have also brought Elaine into contact with a cohort of women, specifically married women journalists, who faced prejudice and difficulties in achieving a successful career and were confronted with pressure to give up their profession on marriage.<sup>162</sup> Elaine, however, pursued her writing within marriage, situating her work as a component of her life, alongside family commitments. She achieved attention in cities such as Winnipeg, linked to writing circles that included celebrated feminist Nellie McClung, with whom she corresponded and had in common membership of the Canadian Women's Press Club.<sup>163</sup> These connections also brought Elaine into a circle of thinking, bound, in part, by

<sup>156</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> <<https://canadianauthors.org/national/history/>> [accessed 21/09/2018].

<sup>159</sup> M-8821, Catley Diary, 1920.

<sup>160</sup> D. James and M. Dann, 'Canadian Women's Press Club', in *The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2016. reproduced at <<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-womens-press-club>> [accessed 21/09/2018].

<sup>161</sup> L. Kay, *The Sweet Sixteen. The Journey that Inspired the Canadian Women's Press Club* (Montreal, Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), pp.150-151.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p.136.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.6. A newspiece about the literary circle living in Calgary, that included McClung and Catley, was reported in the *Winnipeg Tribune* 15 December 1923, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/us-and-world-newspapers/page/view/335689192>> [accessed 02/10/2018]. Correspondence between Catley and McClung is held by the University of Waterloo Library, Ontario.

imperial maternalism and eugenics, with McClung at its heart, and evident through her literature. For example, the collection *Be Good to Yourself*, published in 1930, was a celebration of ways in which the white woman, married and unmarried, might be 'racially effective'.<sup>164</sup>

There is no doubt that Elaine's poetry places centrally both her role as a mother and her identity as a settler in Canada. Her collection *Canada Calling*, which she self-published in 1938, reveals the importance of motherhood to her while also celebrating the relationship with her adopted country.<sup>165</sup> Her "Villanelle" is subtitled "Any Mother to Her Son", and "Maternity" and "Pre-Natal" hails her role as a mother.<sup>166</sup> Although living in the city of Calgary, her work is imbued with the natural environment, and a further repeating theme in her work is the embrace of Canada as a country of diverse peoples. In "To Canada, the hope of the World", Catley links diversity to the promise of her new country's world position: "Stand forth, O Canada, and lead the world; your children born of every race and creed".<sup>167</sup> Combining a theme of nationhood with youth, Catley in "Song for Canadian Youth" again locates Canada as home to "the sons of every race and creed".<sup>168</sup> In the eponymous work, Catley positions Canada as a destination that beckons the "youth of every race and creed".<sup>169</sup> Catley's work, certainly from this particular collection, lacks any of the British imperialist rhetoric favoured by middle-class organisations such as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire whose work in Canada during the

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<sup>164</sup> Devereux, *Growing a Race*, p.55.

<sup>165</sup> E.M. Catley, *Canada Calling* (Calgary: published by the author, August 1938).

<sup>166</sup> E.M. Catley, 'Villanelle', 'Maternity', 'Pre-Natal' in *Canada Calling*, pp. 4, 7, 17.

<sup>167</sup> E.M. Catley, 'To Canada, the Hope of the World', *Canada Calling*, p.6.

<sup>168</sup> E.M. Catley 'Song for Canadian Youth', *Canada Calling*, p.19.

<sup>169</sup> E.M. Catley 'Canada Calling', in *Canada Calling*, p.3.

1920s intersected with migration to promote the role of motherhood as a component of this white imperialist ideology.<sup>170</sup>

However, in her poetic vignettes of characters Catley encountered in her Calgary neighbourhood, it becomes clear that hers was a white-settler world in which she lived.<sup>171</sup> The eyes of “The Farmer” are “clear and blue”, “The Nurse” with initials S McL indicates Scottish descent, and named are “The Statesman”, H B Adshead and “The Doctor”, Lewis Clarke, also likely of British origin. Alberta, the province in which Calgary sits, was a specific target for the IODE’s work in promoting Canadian-ness, through ensuring the dominance of English-speaking communities in response to the high ethnic diversity amongst its migrant communities.<sup>172</sup> I have discussed in the previous chapter the importance of British teaching staff in rural areas and their role in embedding imperialist values. Particularly true of the prairie provinces of Canada, the mayor of Calgary saw this also as a means to combatting multiculturalism.<sup>173</sup> The province of Alberta also demonstrated further reaction against non-British culture when its strong connections with British identity and institutions were presented as part of a social sciences study during the early 1930s which explored the “Americanization” of Canada.<sup>174</sup> Elaine’s engagement with the ideology of empire settlement is ambivalent, but she certainly demonstrated a strong sense of patriotism for Canada in her writing. What is clear, however, is that while, physically, her environment was an urban white-settler society, her imaginings, through her poetry, were cognisant of the diverse country to which she had migrated, and which she celebrated.

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<sup>170</sup> Pickles, *Female Imperialism*, p.36.

<sup>171</sup> Catley, *Canada Calling*.

<sup>172</sup> Pickles, *Female Imperialism*, Chapter 3.

<sup>173</sup> Harper, ‘Educational Tours’, p.53.

<sup>174</sup> J. Herd Thompson, ‘Canada and the “Third British Empire”, 1901 -1939’ in Buckner, *Canada*, p.100.





**Figure 5.4** Elaine Catley circa 1940s.<sup>175</sup>

Elaine's work was a highly personal response to her existence as a migrant-settler. By contrast, British migrant Margaret Macpherson used her

<sup>175</sup> Photograph of Elaine Catley, c.1940s. University of Waterloo Library.

journalism to discuss women's matters on a transnational platform.<sup>176</sup>

Macpherson migrated to New Zealand with her husband whom she met during the First World War while nursing.<sup>177</sup> She arrived in New Zealand at a time when the country was framing its immigration policies around an agenda of social engineering, with legislation designed to prevent people entering who were, for example, non-European, had disabilities or were politically socialist.<sup>178</sup> Macpherson adopted socialism in her work, combining her interest in women's affairs with political content.<sup>179</sup> In a scenario similar to that of Isabel Haigh, also a migrant to New Zealand and mentioned in a previous section, Macpherson's husband and children followed her to where her career was situated when she secured the job as editor for the newspaper *Northlander*.<sup>180</sup> Macpherson, unlike Catley, was at odds with her social environment, her radical political views sitting uneasily in a conservative setting.<sup>181</sup>

Macpherson established a successful career as a local newspaper editor, while raising five sons, yet followed a more unconventional path, rejecting her marriage and becoming a transnational career woman, regularly travelling around the world. Macpherson also enjoyed financial independence, the lack of which prevented many women from seeking divorce and one of the reasons why, during the interwar years in Britain at least, rates remained low.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>176</sup> The Australian Women's Register, reproduced at < <https://www.womenaustralia.info/> [accessed 26/12/2016].

<sup>177</sup> Te Ara, reproduced at <<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4m26/macpherson-margaret-louisa>> [accessed 26/12/2016].

<sup>178</sup> Constantine, 'Immigration and the making of New Zealand', p.135.

<sup>179</sup> Te Ara, reproduced at <<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4m26/macpherson-margaret-louisa>> [accessed 16/10/2018].

<sup>180</sup> Te Ara, reproduced at <<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4m26/macpherson-margaret-louisa>> [accessed 16/10/2018].

<sup>181</sup> Te Ara, reproduced at <<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4m26/macpherson-margaret-louisa>> [accessed 16/10/2018].

<sup>182</sup> Grogan, *Shell Shocked*, p.145-6.

The trajectory of Macpherson's life raises questions about to what extent women were able to pursue their own interests within marriage.<sup>183</sup> Those women working on farms, as discussed, faced extreme hardship in the volume and physical nature of work that they confronted. Macpherson's husband owned a farm, but she did not engage with the land-based work of other married migrant women. Macpherson presents a profile of a migrant woman who, inspired by her settler environment to address the issues women faced, was unable to fulfil her ambitions within marriage. She also existed at a time when women began to question the constraints of married life, and began to seek broader rights while challenging the meaning of marriage.<sup>184</sup>

The main focus of this study is on those women who left Britain for the "white dominions" under the broad umbrella of empire settlement. However, it is also important to acknowledge those who operated beyond these parameters, and yet remained connected to the British empire, especially in the context of interracial marriage. The SOSBW was active in deterring marriage between white British migrant women and non-white men, particularly in countries such as Southern Rhodesia and Kenya, where its work was active during the interwar period, warning of the social and legal implications of interracial unions.<sup>185</sup> However, women did reject their prescribed role as by entering into interracial relationships.<sup>186</sup> Arguably, for British interracial families, existence beyond the "white dominions" was an easier existence, with less chance of marginalisation than if trying to establish themselves in white-settler societies.

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<sup>183</sup> The subject of marital separation and divorce as a consequence, or prompt, for women's migration is under-researched and, while not expanded on in this study, is worthy of future attention.

<sup>184</sup> M. Lake, 'Marriage as Bondage: The anomaly of the citizen wife', *Australian Historical Studies*, 30:112 (1999), pp.116-29.

<sup>185</sup> Bush, 'The Twentieth Century', p.88.

<sup>186</sup> Bush, 'The Twentieth Century' contains this theme.

Yet, as married migrant women, their geographies of movement across empire were still largely determined by their husbands. This can be tracked using data found on passenger lists, demonstrated below. For example, Catherine Victoria Sorley married Mungal Singh in London in 1918.<sup>187</sup> Catherine was born at Chelsea, London into an army family, to a father in the Scots Guards.<sup>188</sup> The family had further connections in Scotland, documented as their last place of residence on the ship's manifest.<sup>189</sup> The family possibly spent time overseas, as there is no evidence of them in the 1911 British census.<sup>190</sup>

In 1919, 21 year-old Catherine, and Mungal, a barrister-at-law, sailed to Paramaribo in British Guiana, along with other family members.<sup>191</sup> The group travelling included Alice Bhagwandy Singh, possibly Mungal's sister-in-law, and her two children Hardutt and Chandravatti.<sup>192</sup> The lives of both women, Catherine and Alice, followed the contours of their husbands', and, in Alice's case, also her son's. Hardutt Singh returned to Scotland as a student at the

<sup>187</sup> England & Wales Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916-2005. 1918 Q2 Apr-May-Jun, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/8753/ons\\_m19182az-0966?pid=64942218&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc%3DQYc59%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DkD3pkGQLVnMoqYz1qo8Jig%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Dcatherine%2520victoria%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dsoley%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D64942218%26bid%3D8753%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D3&treedid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&phsrc=QYc59&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/8753/ons_m19182az-0966?pid=64942218&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DQYc59%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DkD3pkGQLVnMoqYz1qo8Jig%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3Dcatherine%2520victoria%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dsoley%26gsln_x%3D0%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D64942218%26bid%3D8753%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D3&treedid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&phsrc=QYc59&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true) [accessed 03/11/2018].

<sup>188</sup> British Armed Forces Births and Baptisms, 2674 (AB91), reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=bmd%2f0vs%2freq1%2f002895&parentid=bmd%2f0vs%2freq1%2f002895%2f046.C> [accessed 04/11/2018]. A search of the British 1911 census returns across Ancestry.co.uk and Findmypast.co.uk returned no results.

<sup>189</sup> BT 27/904 Passenger List, SS *Stuyvesant*, Falmouth to the West Indies, 16 May 1919, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2997/40610\\_B000903-00257?pid=49064210&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db%3DDUKOutwardPassengerLists%26h%3D49064210%26indiv%3Dtry%26o\\_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D8753&treedid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true?imageId=40610\\_B000903-00258](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2997/40610_B000903-00257?pid=49064210&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db%3DDUKOutwardPassengerLists%26h%3D49064210%26indiv%3Dtry%26o_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D8753&treedid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true?imageId=40610_B000903-00258) [accessed 04/11/2018].

<sup>190</sup> A search of the British 1911 census returns across Ancestry.co.uk and Findmypast.co.uk returned no results.

<sup>191</sup> BT 27/904 Passenger List, SS *Stuyvesant*, Falmouth to the West Indies, 16 May 1919, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2997/40610\\_B000903-00257?pid=49064210&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db%3DDUKOutwardPassengerLists%26h%3D49064210%26indiv%3Dtry%26o\\_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D8753&treedid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true?imageId=40610\\_B000903-00258](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2997/40610_B000903-00257?pid=49064210&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db%3DDUKOutwardPassengerLists%26h%3D49064210%26indiv%3Dtry%26o_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D8753&treedid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true?imageId=40610_B000903-00258) [accessed 04/11/2018].

<sup>192</sup> Alice Bhagwandy Singh can be found on later passenger lists travelling between Britain and British Guiana, with Jung Bahadur Singh, a medical practitioner. BT27/1757 Passenger List, *Golfito*, Southampton to the West Indies, 21 September 1954, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=tna/bt27/1757/00/0076/p/0006f&parentid=tna/bt27/1757000076/00089&fullilmenttypekey=1557> [accessed 04/11/2018].

University of Edinburgh, an additional connection that further extended Alice's trans-empire profile. This pattern prevailed across generations of the Singh family, Alice once again travelling between a London address, consistent on passenger lists, and British Guiana, with companions who were likely to be a daughter-in-law and grandson, her life continually shaped by the requirements of her family.<sup>193</sup>

Following their movement reveals both the journey of their personal agency as married migrant women, the transnational nature of their mobility, and yet one that remained firmly rooted in the British empire. The Singh family was an affluent middle-class family, the men following professions such as barristers and doctors, establishing their lives across Britain and British Guiana. This mobility amongst married couples, located away from the "white dominions", held true across social class. In 1930, Alice and Hassan Khan, a fireman, travelled from Liverpool to Bombay, a couple who had already settled away from Britain.<sup>194</sup> The couple returned to the same address in Everton, Liverpool, a couple of months later in March 1930, locating Alice also, as a transnational migrant, pursuing a transient existence across Britain and

<sup>193</sup> Alice arrived in Britain in June 1957 with housewife Alfreda Singh and child Jainarayan Singh. In August 1957 Alice returned to British Guiana with Jainarayan. Returns of passengers brought to the United Kingdom who embarked at ports out of Europe, 0173/30, *SS Antilles*, June 17 1957, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1518/30807\\_A001382-00141?pid=680871&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc%3Dari244%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3DAlice%2520Bhagwardy%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dsingh%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1893%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D680871%26dbid%3D1518%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D3&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_hsrc=ari244&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageId=30807\\_A001382-00141](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1518/30807_A001382-00141?pid=680871&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3Dari244%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3DAlice%2520Bhagwardy%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dsingh%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1893%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D680871%26dbid%3D1518%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D3&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_hsrc=ari244&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageId=30807_A001382-00141) [accessed 04/11/2018]. BT27/1828/1, Passenger List, *Amakura*, Liverpool to British Guiana, 23 August 1957, reproduced at [https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2997/41039\\_b001827-00312?pid=146096369&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc%3Dari245%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3DAlice%2520Bhagwardy%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dsingh%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1893%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D146096369%26recoff%3D6%25208%26dbid%3D2997%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D21&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_hsrc=ari245&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/2997/41039_b001827-00312?pid=146096369&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3Dari245%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3DAlice%2520Bhagwardy%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3Dsingh%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1893%26catbucket%3Drst%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D146096369%26recoff%3D6%25208%26dbid%3D2997%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D21&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_hsrc=ari245&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true) [accessed 04/11/2018].

<sup>194</sup> BT27/1272 Passenger List, *Britannia*, Liverpool to Bombay, 11 January 1930. Hassan Khan, listed as a fireman, was likely to have been a seafarer. The couple are listed as residing permanently in another part of the British empire, most likely India, to where they were travelling, and documented as their future permanent residence, reproduced at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=TNA%2F2727%2F1272%2F00%2F0048%2FP%2F0004F&parentid=TNA%2F2727%2F1272000048%2F00116> [accessed 05/11/2018].

India.<sup>195</sup> The experiences of the Singh women and Alice Khan reveal a profile of migrant women beyond the established settlement patterns more often associated with British emigration. These patterns situate them in a more complex relationship with empire, and contribute to broader understanding of female mobility, which “hold multiple locations in tension”.<sup>196</sup>

## Conclusion

The women discussed above all became part of a broader female settler society, shaped by British migration over generations. Their common experiences as migrants diverged depending on the demands of family, ambitions of husbands, and the extent to which they sought alternative lives beyond their roles of wife and mother. The contrasting examples of Catley and Macpherson raise a range of questions about how British migrant women responded to their positions as settlers in empire destinations, their position as wives and mothers, and how they wove their careers into their lives. Both women operated in politicised circles, yet their work reveals very different responses, Catley’s very personal, Macpherson’s public. Their engagement with marriage and motherhood also diverges, as Macpherson was able to position her career on an international platform, and chose to do so, while Catley contained her literary pursuits within her marriage. Both women enjoyed economic security, which allowed freedom to pursue occupational activity. This contrasts starkly with those women who found themselves within farming families, and whose contribution was essential to the domestic economy,

<sup>195</sup> reproduced at <[https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1518/30807\\_A000923-00310?pid=4892477&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?\\_phsrc%3D%26phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DAlice%26gsfn\\_x%3D0%26gsln%3DKhan%26gsln\\_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1899%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT\\_CATEGORY%26h%3D4892477%26dbid%3D1518%26indiv%3D1%26ml\\_rpos%3D3&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=arj273&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/interactive/1518/30807_A000923-00310?pid=4892477&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3D%26phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26qh%3DALiEVeiOpj4nNA74E7n2Bg%253D%253D%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DAlice%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DKhan%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1899%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D0%26uidh%3Dmxb%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D4892477%26dbid%3D1518%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D3&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=arj273&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)>

<sup>196</sup> Robertson, “Belles”, p.564.

whether ensuring efficiencies in their household work, or actively engaging with farm work. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that, while family was one aspect of women's lives as overseas settlers, it was not a role that exclusively defined them, and that the migration experience both demanded and offered an experience beyond motherhood, and one which varied significantly.



## Chapter 6. Migrant Women, Object Stories:

### “Extending the Space for a Female Past.”<sup>1</sup>

Purvis observed that “examining the material conditions of women’s lives...seems to be the most legitimate way to construct a feminist women’s history that has women centre stage”.<sup>2</sup> This is certainly an approach worth attention and here I explore to what extent themes of women’s migration history are represented through the collecting and interpretation of museum artefacts, as a phase in their lives as material culture. I have included this aspect to give consideration to how museums, through knowledge gathered about collections, and the associated interpretation, might support the historiographical themes of the study and open up routes into understanding women’s migration history. I ask questions about objects held within museums in countries that I discuss, namely Britain, Canada and Australia. Through such questioning, I assess to what extent collections reflect themes present within women’s migration histories, and explore possibilities of utilising objects to better support this history by shifting them into a mode more responsive to diverse interpretation.

#### Methods in locating museum objects

The application of digital sources lies at the heart of my dissertation. The field of digitisation and museology covers vast ground, as demonstrated in Parry’s edited volume that looks at its different aspects, from the emergence of

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<sup>1</sup> The title taken from B. Labrum, ‘The Female Past’ in M. Daly Goggin and B. Fowkes Tobin (eds), *Material Women, 1750-1950* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p.329.

<sup>2</sup> B. Fowkes Tobin and M. Daly Goggin, ‘Introduction: Materializing Women’ in M. Daly Goggin and B. Fowkes Tobin (eds) *Women and Things, 1750-1950* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p.3.



the digital age to collecting new media.<sup>3</sup> The museums that have virtual access to their collections allow an assessment of objects, and their related stories, that might prompt a fuller acknowledgement of women's migration history. It is essential, at this stage, to note that digitised material available through websites does not include all possible material. The very nature of the *Migration to New Worlds* project, for example, was one of selection using a thematic approach.<sup>4</sup> Not all collections are accessible through these routes, nor do all museums use digitisation as a medium of public engagement.

However, digital platforms do provide a broad, and global, reach, while also allowing for consistent interrogation and exploration of the metadata that support the visual and textual representation of artefacts. The starting point for the selection of objects discussed was the *Migration to New Worlds* database, a resource that collates sources from museums across the world around themes of emigration.<sup>5</sup> The date range for the database content is 1800-1924, partially encompassing the timeframe for this study. For that reason, my selection of objects began with a search between the dates 1914-1924. The database is arranged both chronologically and thematically and draws on the collections of 15 international museums and libraries, providing a selection of objects for the purposes of analysis.

The search for objects across the range stated above yielded rich, if numerically limited, results, raising questions about the lack of curiosity within museums around the subject of women's migration. Of course, this may simply reflect a lack of extant material relating to British migrant women. However, as

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<sup>3</sup> R. Parry (ed), *Museums in a Digital Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> For example, about 40% of the collections of National Museums Australia are accessible via their digital collections explorer platform, reproduced at <<http://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/about>> [accessed 04/12/2017].

<sup>5</sup> Migration to New Worlds, © Adam Matthew 2017, reproduced at <<http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk.liverpool.idm.oclc.org>> [accessed 11/05/2017].

I will argue, the absence of interrogation of the subject can also be identified in existing museum collections. The end date of 1924 for the database, its sole focus on migration history, and its limitation in terms of representation of collections, needed to be supplemented if I was to test effectively the potential of material culture within museums in supporting women's narratives. I therefore extended my web-based search to include museums in the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand that were likely to hold migration-related collections. This allowed an entry point into collections that, while not currently documented to support narratives of migrant women, show promise to do so. My search was guided by the content of previous chapters and included, for example, museums with agricultural and industrial collections that potentially represent the occupations of migrant women beyond their recognised domestic roles.

Using the selected objects as a pathway to constructing women's stories, it is possible to create a picture of the diverse nature of their lives. We know about Susannah Nicholls and Laura Francatelli because objects that reflect part of their lives exist, and have entered into the public domain as museum objects.<sup>6</sup> Using the methodology of searching museums with known migration-related collections made the Nicholls collection very accessible. Laura Francatelli's apron, held in Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool) was located through a more indirect route. While the museum does hold migration-related collections, this object's relationship with the theme was identified through the text accompanying the digitised image,

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<sup>6</sup> Collection relating to Susannah Nicholls held in Museums Victoria, reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/search?query=sU.S.A.nnah+nicholls>> [accessed 03/01/2018]. Collection relating to Laura Francatelli held in Merseyside Maritime Museum, National Museums Liverpool, reproduced at <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx>> [accessed 11/05/2017].

positioned within a *Titanic*-related narrative on the website, yet allowing a way through to a fuller picture of her life.<sup>7</sup>

### **Object biographies: the literature of material culture**

The craft of piecing together the detail of people's lives, through material culture, is underpinned by the relationship between subject and object, viewed and discussed through varying disciplines including anthropology, archaeology, visual and fine arts, gender studies and museology.<sup>8</sup> The literature of material culture encompasses many perspectives, including the development of consumerism and commoditisation, and people's relationship with these processes, as a growing economic and social presence. Linked to this is the work that discusses the value attached to objects, which, in turn, influences their meanings and pushes them into cultural and social, as well as economic, frameworks, a concept deftly applied by De Groot in her discussion of imperial materiality.<sup>9</sup> Appadurai set the pace for the development of material culture as a distinct field in his seminal work *The Social Life of Things* on which much subsequent thinking has been built.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of object biographies that features in Appadurai's work was developed by Kopytoff, whose ideas shifted things from being perceived as static, singular commodities to being recognised as containing multiple cultural meanings, capable of changing over time.<sup>11</sup> This notion of object biographies

<sup>7</sup> MMM.2003.221, Laura Francatelli's apron, reproduced at <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx>> [accessed 11/05/2017].

<sup>8</sup> For a broad range of perspectives on material culture see C. Tilley et al, *Handbook of Material Culture* (London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage Publications Ltd, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> J. De Groot, 'Metropolitan desires and colonial connections: reflections on consumption and empire' in C. Hall and S. Rose (eds), *At Home With The Empire. Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp.166-190. De Groot applies the theorising of material culture of notable sociologists Bourdieu and Barthes.

<sup>10</sup> A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> I. Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as process' in Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, pp. 64-92.

has been developed by scholars such as Hoskins and Hahn and Weiss.<sup>12</sup> Hoskins unpicks the theoretical approach applied to the idea of object biographies and discusses its value, both in terms of material culture being imbued with anthropological meaning through interpretation, and also by locating it in historical contexts. This, Hoskins suggests, allows additional significance through links to archival sources. Hahn and Weiss introduce the concept of an object itinerary, giving material culture a mobility beyond the linear biographical approach.<sup>13</sup> The role of the individual in applying meanings to objects is also emphasised by Steiner who argues against the implicit animated nature of the object, emphasising instead the agency of the subject as critical in influencing the shifting role of material culture across time and space.<sup>14</sup>

Such a role might represent anything: domestic consumerism; trade commodity; gift or keepsake; migrant possession; museum artefact. I demonstrate in case studies below that one object may encompass all these roles through its lifetime, taking on simultaneous meanings by different subjects at different times, and in different places. I also consider the application of this thinking about objects to be particularly pertinent when human migration shapes part of their existence, adding extra dimension to the environments in which they exist, and within which they may become separated from one subject, and attached to another. Arguably, in these cases, multiple subjects may apply different meanings to objects simultaneously.

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<sup>12</sup> J. Hoskins, 'Agency, Biography and Objects' in C. Tilley et al, *Handbook of Material Culture*; H.P. Hahn and H. Weiss, *Mobility, Meaning and Transformations of Things. Shifting contexts of material culture through time and space* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Hahn and Weiss, *Mobility*.

<sup>14</sup> C. Steiner, 'Rights of Passage: On the liminal identity of art in the border zone' in F. Myers (ed), *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press) pp.207-31.

Museologists have absorbed the notion of object stories into theoretical thinking. Scholars such as Pearce and, more recently Hill, have discussed the utility of this approach in understanding museum collections and their role in supporting personal narratives within the context of display and interpretation.<sup>15</sup> However, in order to draw out the dynamic characteristic of objects, it is necessary to identify their “itineraries” and arrange the data in such a way that their biographies can be effectively presented. This has been acknowledged by museologists as challenging when confronted with museum collections that have been documented using traditional classification methods. Pearce takes a very practical approach to resolving this through a series of examples through which she demonstrates how objects need to become “message bearing” and “capable of a very large range of interpretations.”<sup>16</sup>

### **The materiality of women**

Existing literature specific to women and material culture is predominantly concerned with the rise of consumerism as a gendered practice and the ways in which it was promoted, manipulated and demonstrated. For this reason, much attention is paid to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The work by Cohen on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century middle-class possessions, and Hamlett in her study of the spaces of separate spheres in Victorian England, look at gendered domestic material culture.<sup>17</sup> Work by Pointin, with a focus on luxury goods, and Kowaleski-Wallace, is concerned with how women engaged with consumerism more

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<sup>15</sup> S. Pearce, *On Collecting. An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995) and K. Hill, *Museums and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> S.M. Pearce, ‘Objects as meaning; or narrating the past’ in S. Pearce (ed), *Objects of Knowledge* (London & Atlantic Highlands: The Athlone Press, 1990), p.127.

<sup>17</sup> D. Cohen, *Household Gods* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006) and J. Hamlett, ‘ “The Dining Room should be the Man’s Paradise, as the Drawing Room is the Woman’s”: Gender and Middle Class Domestic Space in England’, 1850-1910’ in *Gender and History*, 21.3 (2009), pp.576-591.

broadly, and their role in its ascendancy, both as protagonists and subjects.<sup>18</sup>

We also have work by Batchelor and Kaplan that captures women's responses to change through an analysis of fashion, interior design, art and literature.<sup>19</sup>

While there is far less attention paid to domestic material culture of the interwar years, and a consistent under-representation of working-class women's engagement with consumerism, Cowman introduces an alternative perspective to looking at interior design through her work on domestic spaces and the liberation of women from the Victorian construct of "separate spheres".<sup>20</sup> This more politicised approach can also be found in work by Giles in her discussion about working-class women and their consumer relationship with modernising domestic technology of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>21</sup> Taking a similar approach, Wosk studies women's relationships with machinery and technology, looking at how bicycles and automobiles, for example, were targeted at female markets from the late nineteenth century onwards and how consumerism reframed lives.<sup>22</sup> While this work falls outside the field of material culture, it offers insights into the discipline for the historic period of my study, while also providing further contrast in its approach to class and politics.

These varying aspects of women and material culture, including their role in the development of museums, are well captured in the recent work by Daly Goggin and Fowkes Tobin and Hill.<sup>23</sup> Their trilogy of contributions is

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<sup>18</sup> M.R. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: women, possession and representation in English visual culture, 1665- 1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming subjects: women, shopping and business in the eighteenth century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> J. Batchelor and C. Kaplan, *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> K. Cowman, 'From the Housewife's Point of View: female citizenship and the gendered domestic interior in post-First World War Britain, 1918-1928' in *English Historical Review*, 130.543 (2015) pp.352-383.

<sup>21</sup> J. Giles, 'A Home of One's Own. Women and Domesticity in England 1918-1950' in *Women's Studies International Forum* 16.3 (1993), pp.239-253.

<sup>22</sup> J. Wosk, *Women and the Machine. Representations from the Spinning Wheel to the Electronic Age* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Daly Goggin and Fowkes Tobin, *Women and Things*; M. Daly Goggin and B. Fowkes Tobin (eds), *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); Daly Goggin and Fowkes

concerned with women's craftwork, consumerism and collecting. It also provides a natural intersection with museums including Labrum's take on the "cultural biography" of objects approach to women's material culture.<sup>24</sup> Usefully for this study, recent work by Hill also adopts the approach of using object biographies to look at donations made by women, and the influence these had on reshaping museums. However, I also consider collections that do, or might, support women's history, regardless of the donor's gender, extending the discussion to include broader contexts.

**"Things mattered to people and they must matter to those who write their histories."<sup>25</sup>**

Siska, in her work that looks at the importance to the writer Mary Shelley of certain personal possessions, seeks to reflect her as "not only a woman of letters, but an artist, mother and homemaker, as well as a fashionable and well-groomed lady."<sup>26</sup> It is exactly such multiplicity of roles that I am looking for through the belongings of the women featured in this section.<sup>27</sup>

The importance of embracing multiple narratives of material culture can be demonstrated through the example of Norwegian migrant Anna Knuttsdotter's travelling trunk, dating from the nineteenth century and held in the collections of the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec.<sup>28</sup> While not representing a British migrant woman from my period of study, this illustrates a generic issue well. The intrinsic materiality of the artefact, in the

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Tobin, *Material Women*; K. Hill, *Women and Museums, 1850-1914. Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Labrum, 'The Female Past', p.316.

<sup>25</sup> Fowkes Tobin and Daly Goggin, 'Materializing Women', p.3.

<sup>26</sup> P. Siska, ' "The Things I So Indispensably Needed": Material Objects as a Reflection of M Shelley's Life.' in Daly Goggin and Fowkes Tobin, *Material Women*, p.17.

<sup>27</sup> Collection relating to Susannah Nicholls held in Museums Victoria, reproduced at <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/search?query=sU.S.A.nnah+nicholls> [accessed 03/01/2018]. Collection relating to Laura Francatelli held in Merseyside Maritime Museum, National Museums Liverpool, reproduced at <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx> [accessed 11/05/2017].

<sup>28</sup> Object number 73-70, Anna Knuttsdotter's travelling trunk, reproduced at [http://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/artifact/84863/?q=anna+knuttsdotter&page\\_num=1&item\\_num=0&media\\_id=256789](http://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/artifact/84863/?q=anna+knuttsdotter&page_num=1&item_num=0&media_id=256789) [accessed 16/05/2017].

existence of Anna's inscribed name and date of travel, places it as part of women's migration history. However, the cataloguing information contains a gendered approach that works against the full reality of Anna's life in Canada, most explicit in the object description:

Anna Knutsdotter originally immigrated to Minnesota but later married a Saskatchewan farmer. At the top corners of her trunk are six-inch (15cm) nails secured with square washers, a common feature of Viking-ship construction. This technology had not changed in ten centuries.<sup>29</sup>

The description focuses on the physical materiality and aesthetic of the object, situated within the category of Furnishings. While it signposts plural meanings of the artefact, it compartmentalises Anna as a farmer's wife, despite a prior life as a single woman in the USA. As discussed in Chapter 5, women who settled on farms, whether in Canada, Australia or New Zealand, played a significant role in their management and operation, typically alongside their critical roles as wife, mother and (unpaid) household manager, and yet the catalogue entry fails to reflect this reality.

The pre-eminence given to Anna's role as farmer's wife is symptomatic of the gendered approach present in much museum cataloguing and interpretation that, as a result, finds its way into the public domain, even more so in an era of digital accessibility. This may serve to situate women's histories not only within narrow and inaccurate interpretations but also as ones that deny the full diversity of their lives. This is a challenge, and deeply entrenched in many museums, as Clark Smith highlights in her study on gendered aspects

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<sup>29</sup> Object number 73-70, Anna Knutsdotter's travelling trunk reproduced at [http://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/artifact/84863/?q=anna+knutsdotter&page\\_num=1&item\\_num=0&media\\_id=256789](http://www.historymuseum.ca/collections/artifact/84863/?q=anna+knutsdotter&page_num=1&item_num=0&media_id=256789) [accessed 15/01/2018].



of exhibitions.<sup>30</sup> Clark Smith includes observations on language applied to interpretation, for example the isolated positioning of women as spouses in companion portraits.<sup>31</sup> Such a traditional approach by museums is an extension of broader perspectives, mirroring the separate spheres of the nineteenth-century middle-class domestic home within which existed gendered materiality, as discussed by Hamlett in her study into how spaces were arranged, organised and occupied.<sup>32</sup> As household objects were gendered it is unsurprising that when some of them began lives as museum objects they continued this identity, which in turn influenced a specific understanding of them. However, the gendering of collections can also create a platform for women's histories if their full meanings are acknowledged, understood and interpreted.

**“We have broken out in a fresh place!” Susannah Nicholls, an Englishwoman in Australia<sup>33</sup>**

The collection relating to Susannah Nicholls, who emigrated with her family to Australia in 1923, consists of two brass candlesticks, two Wedgwood dinner service pieces, a prayer and hymn book, and a family bible, all acquired by Museums Victoria in 2004.<sup>34</sup> Alongside these are letters written by Susannah to her sister in England, held by the State Archives of Victoria.<sup>35</sup> The acquisition date of the objects places them firmly within a collecting trend that paid increasing attention to individuals, especially amongst museums that took responsibility for presenting the everyday life of individuals, breaking out of the

<sup>30</sup> B. Clark Smith, 'A Woman's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories' in A.K. Levin (ed), *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.65-70.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.68. Clark Smith gives the example of the portraits of Helen Caldicott and William Penn – the former labelled with the additional 'Mrs William Penn' while the latter has no reference to marital status.

<sup>32</sup> Hamlett, 'The Dining Room' in *Gender and History*.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Olive and Gayford Rix, December 7 1922.

<sup>34</sup> Susannah Nicholls collection, reproduced at

<<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/search?query=sU.S.A.nnah+nicholls>> [accessed 03/01/2018].

<sup>35</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS 12127, Susannah May Nicholls, Letters, 1922-29.

mode of categorising and ordering collections according to linear progress.<sup>36</sup> This approach was characteristic of history museums that sat within a twentieth-century trend of development, which saw a challenge to the traditional “closed” approach of unquestioned expert authority and a new engagement with “the living present.”<sup>37</sup>

Susannah and her family migrated to Australia in 1923 under the Empire Settlement Act, taking the items illustrated below with her.<sup>38</sup> Collecting around British imperial expansion is not without its problems, as Labrum argues in her analysis of historic displays representing women in Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, New Zealand.<sup>39</sup> These, she argues “rested on particular notions of the female colonial past”.<sup>40</sup> Even into the second half of the twentieth century, displays at Canterbury Museum “materialized certain styles of women’s history” that prevented the representation of a “modern female present”.<sup>41</sup> As discussed in introduction of this study, migration under the Empire Settlement Act formed part of imperialist policy, and sought to strengthen the white population and associated power base in the dominion countries. The Nicholls family, along with thousands of others, moved to Australia during a period in which the White Australia policy was central to settlement schemes. However, as Sangster has demonstrated, the treatment of migrant women could be both heavily gendered and class driven, as evidenced by the prejudices young working-class Englishwomen faced in

<sup>36</sup> For a useful account of the development of public museums in the UK. see K. Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London and New York: Routledge), 1992.

<sup>37</sup> J. Roberts, ‘The Museum and the crisis of critical postmodernism’ in *Third Text*, 11:41 (1997) pp. 67-74, reproduced at < <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09528829708576702> > [accessed 09/05/2017].

<sup>38</sup> M. Stevenson, ‘Susannah Nicholls, English Migrant, 1923 in Museums Victoria Collections’, 2009, reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2985>> [accessed 18/01/2018].

<sup>39</sup> Labrum, ‘The Female Past’, p.315.

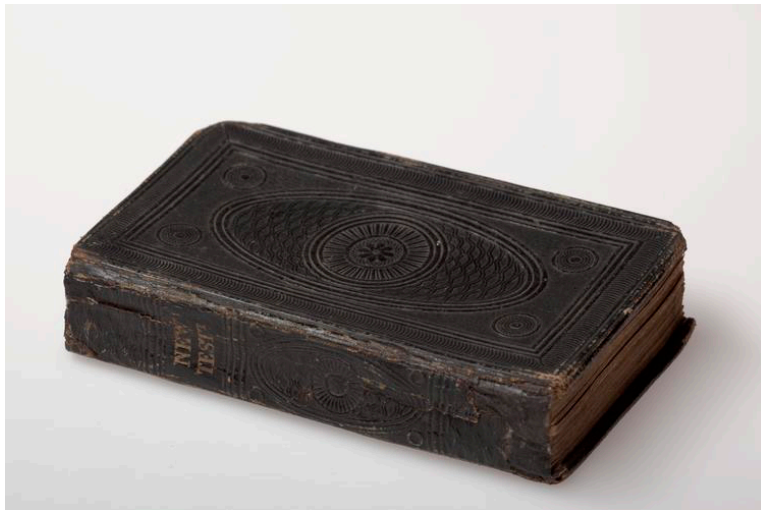
<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.316.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.325.

Canada if they failed to conform and fell into “delinquency”.<sup>42</sup> Through the study of associated material culture, an opportunity emerges to collate the complexity of women’s experiences within a historiography that acknowledges the political and cultural environments in which they acted, while also creating room for their individual histories.



**Figure 6.1** Household items belonging to Susannah Nicholls, (l-r) Soup Bowl - Wedgwood, Green, England, circa 1907; Saucer - Wedgwood, Green, circa 1907; Candle holder, brass, England, circa 1910s; Book - Common Prayer Hymns, Oxford University Press, England, circa 1900 <sup>43</sup>



**Figure 6.2** New Testament brought from England to Australia by Susannah Nicholls in 1923, published by University Press, Oxford in 1848.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Sangster, *Domesticating Girls*, 179

<sup>43</sup> Susannah Nicholls collection Copyright Museums Victoria / CC BY (Licensed as [Attribution 4.0 International](#))

<sup>44</sup> New Testament brought from England to Australia by Susannah Nicholls in 1923. This Bible was published by University Press, Oxford in 1848. Copyright Museums Victoria / CC BY (Licensed as [Attribution 4.0 International](#))

Taking this collection in isolation places Susannah firmly in her domestic environment, and it would be easy to arrive at assumptions that her life was bound by marriage and motherhood. The gendering of the collection is reinforced through the objects' relationship with other items that belonged to John Spence, Susannah's uncle, who emigrated with her. These include John's woodworking tools used to make furniture in their new home.<sup>45</sup> This reflection of the separate domestic spheres that defined the typical British home is extended to the British migrant household in rural Victoria through gradual improvements to the space in which the Nicholls lived. Susannah speaks about writing in a bedroom "set free for a sitting room" and of "my little kitchen" and "lovely little cooking range".<sup>46</sup>

Her placement within a solely domestic domain might be readily reinforced by the fact that when she travelled to Australia in 1923, Susannah was listed as a "housewife" on the ship's passenger list, obscuring her profession as a teacher.<sup>47</sup> Her teaching work, as a married woman in Australia, was atypical.<sup>48</sup> Yet, in Australia, and similar to the missionary women of Canada during the late nineteenth century, it is likely that British migrant women in new environments, geographically and culturally, encountered more fluidity in norms around gendered roles.<sup>49</sup> Because the life story of Susannah was collected alongside these artefacts, and thanks to the existence of her

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<sup>45</sup> Susannah Nicholls collection, reproduced at <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/search?query=susannah+nicholls> [accessed 06/02/2018].

<sup>46</sup> Nicholls, SLV, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to the Rix Family, September 22 1924 and Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Olive Rix, 18 May 1926.

<sup>47</sup> BT27/1018, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 18/01/2018].

<sup>48</sup> K. Whitehead, 'The Spinster Teacher in Australia from the 1890s to the 1960s' in *History of Education Review* 36.1 (2007), pp. 1-17. Whitehead argues that it was not until after the Second World War that marriage bars were relaxed.

<sup>49</sup> See Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*. Rutherford discusses how British women working as missionaries in remote areas of Canada found that spheres of gender were reframed as they interacted with new communities and new geographies.

letters, new meanings can be created through them to reflect this reality.<sup>50</sup> For example, while clearly the New Testament Bible had strong familial connections, its assumed use within the home and church can be tested, and extended to the possibility that Susannah used it with her schoolchildren, especially given the dominant presence of religion in teaching practices.<sup>51</sup> Given this fuller acknowledgement, all these artefacts can be better interpreted. Alongside Susannah's domestic duties, her daily routine of teaching can be viewed through the busyness of her life: "I have to be out of the house by 12.45. & I often have to leave jobs undone to finish when I come home..."<sup>52</sup>

The biographies of these objects carry meanings across Susannah's life, and beyond. They were selected by Susannah to remain part of her life as a migrant and settler, when many other material possessions were sold in order to raise funds for the family's relocation. Prior to her move, Susannah wrote to her sister that "The carvan (sic), house and furniture sale and current cash we hope will come to about £300 and with that we hope to make a start in a new country."<sup>53</sup> Essential, transportable items only would have been taken, as it was costly to transport larger pieces, and restrictions of baggage allowance on board ship forced a strict selection amongst migrants.<sup>54</sup>

The Nicholls collection therefore sits firmly within the category of migrant possessions, with both practical and emotional attachment. The Wedgwood tea service has an additional meaning as a wedding gift, while the

<sup>50</sup> Stevenson, 'Susannah Nicholls', reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2985>> [accessed 18/01/2018].

<sup>51</sup> See J. Trotman, J. and T. O'Donoghue, 'Becoming a woman teacher: memories of learning to be a monitor in Western Australia in the 1920s and 1930s.' in *Oxford Review of Education* 36.2 (2010), pp.171-185. Trotman and O'Donoghue discuss how prayer was a routine part of teacher training in Australia.

<sup>52</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to the Rix Family, 17 February 1926.

<sup>53</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Olive and Gayford Rix, December 7 1922.

<sup>54</sup> A. McCarthy, 'Migrant Voyages to New Worlds in the Twentieth Century' in *International Journal of Maritime History* 18:1 (2006), pp.79-102. On Shaw Savill vessels to Australia during the late 1920s, for example, 15 cubic feet of personal baggage was permitted.

bible and hymn-book carry religious significance as cultural items transported to, and implanted within a new environment.<sup>55</sup> The candlesticks, still holding residue of candle wax, were also possibly part of Susannah's preparations for married life, although dated by the museum as being made slightly later, circa 1910.<sup>56</sup>

The role of material culture in migration has been studied by scholars such as Belk whose work on nineteenth-century Mormons includes perspectives on gender.<sup>57</sup> Belk argues that women focused on practical domesticity while men's concerns lay with creating the required domicile environment. Using Belk's codification, the tools of John Spence would represent practicality as well as a tangible transfer of skill and competence. However, such classification of meanings around objects is not helpful in its gendered assumptions through the examples provided. While women certainly transferred domesticity, they were excluded from examples of transfer of competencies, reserved for the craftsmen amongst the migrant groups. This fails to acknowledge the skills required for household management and the additional roles of many migrant women that encompassed a complex multidimensional life, demonstrable throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>58</sup>

The items that Susannah did take with her to Australia, while clearly very practical, also provided her with strong links to her former home and close family. They constitute the cherished possessions discussed by Folkman et al.

<sup>55</sup> See Stevenson, 'Susannah Nicholls', reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2985>> [accessed 07/02/2018]. Susannah married William Nicholls in 1907.

<sup>56</sup> Remnants of wax on the candlesticks are recorded against the object record suggesting practical use rather than decorative, reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1091992>> [accessed 17/01/2018].

<sup>57</sup> R.W. Belk, 'Moving Possessions: An Analysis Based on Personal Documents from the 1847-1869 Mormon Migration' in *Journal of Consumer Research* 19:3 (1992), pp.339-361.

<sup>58</sup> Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.212-244, for a discussion around the range of work and activity that migrant women undertook.

that serve as tangible symbolism of significant events, in this case migration and separation.<sup>59</sup> In her letters Susannah talks about the familiarity of household goods, well used and clearly treasured and which served to counter and to reinforce the impact of separation from her family in England:

You'd like to peep at me making tea in the familiar old Braywood  
teapot, using the same cutlery & bed linen, pillows etc. & table  
linen – sadly worn and frayed now but I would just like to hang  
on to the old things till you come out.<sup>60</sup>

One of Susannah's roles was as custodian of the family religion, demonstrated through her possession of a Book of Common Prayer and New Testament Bible. Religious items were common amongst the possessions of migrants and prayer books were often found amongst luggage on voyages.<sup>61</sup> Lyons, in his study of female readership during the nineteenth century, discussed the role of women as "guardian of custom, tradition and family ritual" and observed how this was exported to Australia and was especially prevalent amongst Protestant migrant families.<sup>62</sup> The New Testament Bible, with its personalised inscriptions inside the front cover, places Susannah as the keeper of the family faith, and yet she also broke with custom by passing it onto her son John, rather than her elder child Margaret, with the written message "To John from his loving Mother 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1922".<sup>63</sup> Susannah's faith is evident in the letters to her sister, from the time of her migrating to "possess a

<sup>59</sup> C. Folkman Curasi, L.L. Price and E.J. Arnould 'How Individuals' Cherished Possessions become Families' Inalienable Wealth' in *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31:3 (2004) pp.609-622.

<sup>60</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Olive Rix, 18 May 1926. Susannah and William lived at Braywood between about 1910 and 1920. See Stevenson, 'Susannah Nicholls', reproduced at <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2985> [accessed 07/02/2018].

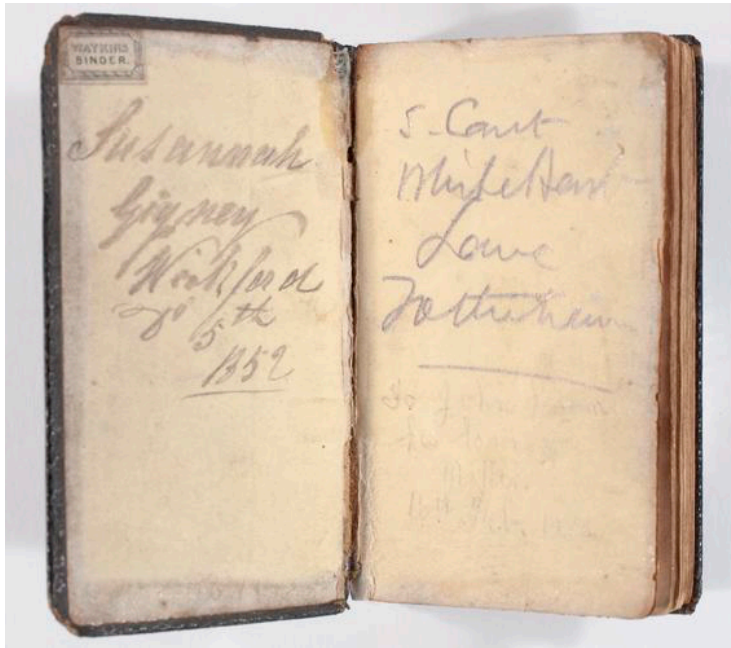
<sup>61</sup> McCarthy, 'Migrant Voyages' in *International Journal of Maritime History*.

<sup>62</sup> M. Lyons, 'New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers' in G. Cavallo, R. Chartier and L. Cochrane, *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 313-342.

<sup>63</sup> This text, not legible on object, was verified by the Museum of Immigration, Museums Victoria by email, 17 January 2018.



small slice of God's earth" to her final written words in April 1929, weeks before her death.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 6.3** Inside cover of Susannah Nicholls' family bible.<sup>65</sup>

The inscriptions within the bible embed relationships across generations, that, when explored, tell of strong female influences that shaped Susannah's journey to becoming a teacher, wife and mother. Its ultimate destination, at Museums Victoria, physically and digitally, provides the access to unlock its stories, and adds to the material culture that allows a better understanding of the history of migrant women and the forces that shaped their lives.

Susannah Nicholls, née Cant, was born in London in 1879, to Emma (née Gigney) and Samuel Cant.<sup>66</sup> The initial name in the bible is, however, that of Susannah's grandmother, Susannah Gigney. It is through this maternal family line that the tradition of women pursuing professional occupation and expertise is introduced. The work of Susannah Gigney herself is disregarded in

<sup>64</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letters from Susannah Nicholls to Olive and Gay Rix, December 7 1922 and April 1929.

<sup>65</sup> Susannah Nicholls' Family Bible, Copyright Museums Victoria / CC BY (Licensed as [Attribution 4.0 International](#))

<sup>66</sup> Emma Gigney married Samuel Cant in London in 1877. England & Wales Marriages 1837-2005, reproduced at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) [accessed 26/01/2018].



census returns, either represented through a blank, or, after the death of her husband, framed in relationship to him as his widow.<sup>67</sup> These records ignore Susannah Gigney's role in the family harness-making enterprise, particularly after her husband's death in 1875. For four years, Susannah operated the business, her ability to do so indicating a longstanding, if unacknowledged, involvement alongside her husband. Susannah successfully applied for business renewal licences, and on her retirement at the age of 60, passed ownership to her son.<sup>68</sup>

The next name written in the bible is that of Susannah May Cant (later Nicholls). There is no date against the inscription, but it is possible that Susannah Gigney passed this bible to her granddaughter on the death of her daughter Emma, mother of Susannah May, in 1890.<sup>69</sup> The address written against Susannah's name, White Hart Lane, Tottenham, corresponds with that registered for the family in the 1891 census, locating her taking possession of the bible around the same time.<sup>70</sup> Again, using census records, it is possible to map Susannah's mother Emma Cant's relationships with female relatives and draw out the possible influences on her life that she passed on to her daughter. Emma is listed as spending time with her unmarried aunt Elizabeth Smith at her farm in 1861, where no other occupants were registered.<sup>71</sup> It is unclear how Elizabeth Smith, as an unmarried woman, came to be head of the farm, but her status and independence may well have made an impression on her young niece. Teenage Emma then spent time with her older sister M, who was

<sup>67</sup> Susannah Gigney is recorded in the census returns 1851 to 1901, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> England, Wales & Scotland census [accessed 26/01/2018].

<sup>68</sup> *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 28 April 1876 and the *Essex Herald*, 29 April 1879, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 26/01/2018].

<sup>69</sup> Deaths registered in July, August, and September 1890, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 26/01/2018].

<sup>70</sup> England, Wales & Scotland census, 1891, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 26/01/2018].

<sup>71</sup> England, Wales & Scotland census, 1861, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 26/01/2018].

head of the Village School House in Vange, Essex, during 1871.<sup>72</sup> M, unmarried and pursuing her career as a teacher, added to the network of family women defined by professional ambition alongside, in some cases, marriage. Once married, Emma Cant (née Gigney) is listed as visiting her mother in Wickford, Essex, with her daughter Susannah, in 1881.<sup>73</sup>

The census activity demonstrates the strong links between women of the family, and the passing of the bible from Susannah Gigney to her granddaughter Susannah May Cant signals the loss of Emma while also carrying this embedded narrative of close female family ties characterised by a diverse cast, negotiating their respective routes through nineteenth-century England and twentieth-century Australia.

### **Watershed dates and distortions of collecting: repositioning the narrative of Laura Francatelli**

Both Schlereth in the 1970s and Walsh in the 1990s argued about the effective mediation of museum collections through their interpretation and display.<sup>74</sup> Schlereth explored the impact on museum collecting of arranging history around commemorative dates that become established in national memories, thus creating distortions.<sup>75</sup> Walsh was equally concerned with museum processes that impacted on collecting and the representation of history, which, he argued, failed to include the “wider, more common processes that would have dominated the everyday lives of ordinary people.”<sup>76</sup>

In the following section, I discuss how an apron, worn by a survivor of the *Titanic* disaster, has come to dominate the life narrative of its owner

<sup>72</sup> England, Wales & Scotland census, 1871, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 26/01/2018].

<sup>73</sup> England, Wales & Scotland census, 1881, reproduced at <[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)> [accessed 26/01/2018].

<sup>74</sup> T.J. Schlereth, ‘Collecting Ideas and Artifacts’ in B. Messias Carbonell (ed) *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), pp.335-347 and Walsh, *The Representation of the Past*.

<sup>75</sup> Schlereth, ‘Collecting Ideas’.

<sup>76</sup> Walsh, *The Representation of the Past*, p.36.

through the prism of this extraordinary event, and how, by using the same object as a discussion point, an additional story of migration, personal agency and transnationalism can be introduced and serve to rebalance her history. Arguably, the example of the apron has served to propel the narrative of survivor Laura Francatelli into the popular culture that now defines the disaster. However, the object, which has as much connection with Francatelli as a migrant as that of a *Titanic* survivor, has also led to a distortion of her story. Through a discussion of this object, the dominant narrative can be disrupted, and an alternative introduced.

The name of Laura Francatelli is firmly linked to the *Titanic* disaster of 1912, as a survivor and for her association with the celebrated couturier Lady “Lucile” Duff Gordon.<sup>77</sup> In contemporary newspaper reports, Francatelli is described both as “secretary” and “maid” to Lady Duff Gordon.<sup>78</sup> The existence of an apron that Francatelli was wearing at the time of the sinking, and its display within a *Titanic*-themed exhibition at the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool, England, situate her centrally within this narrative, supported by web-based interpretation.<sup>79</sup>

It is certainly possible to make the case that Laura Francatelli’s apron represents an extraordinary event and that its representation of her life, as a result, is distorted. Yet, arguably, it is because of the *Titanic* tragedy that meanings were applied to this object, creating a trajectory of preservation, and its ultimate role as a museum artefact. The apron’s existence, as a result, allows a route to its owner’s history, which might otherwise have remained

<sup>77</sup> Lady Duff Gordon (Lucile), *Discretions and Indiscretions* (London: Jarrolds Ltd, 1932), pp.147-170.

<sup>78</sup> *Framlingham Weekly News*, 25 May 1912, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f00013>> [accessed 16/01/2018] and *Leeds Mercury*, 22 April 1912, reproduced at <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000076%2f19120422%2f129>> [accessed 16/01/2018].

<sup>79</sup> Laura Francatelli’s apron, reproduced at <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx>> [accessed 11/05/2017].

largely unknown. Laura Francatelli is important in supporting the narrative of women who emigrated to the USA during the First World War, as discussed in Chapter 3. Francatelli's history contrasts sharply with that of Nicholls, and yet they both represent women who challenged the prevailing view of the profile of migrant women of their time.

Because the museum has collected the stories around the object, including testimonies from Laura and a descendant through whom the apron entered the collection, it places itself in a position to delve into the object's history and provenance, allowing for a richer and more balanced narrative to be built around Laura Francatelli that takes her identity beyond that of *Titanic* survivor and situates her as a successful married, professional migrant woman.

As a married woman, travelling internationally for work purposes during the First World War, and without her husband, Laura Francatelli presents an intriguing example of a British migrant woman. Her arrival to settle permanently in the USA formed part of a continuum of travel that continued throughout her life, sometimes with her employer, on occasion with her husband, and, on at least one voyage, seemingly alone.<sup>80</sup> As with Susannah Nicholls, the fabric of her life was complex, and extended beyond her marital status. Laura Francatelli was at once an international worker, as secretary to Lady Duff Gordon, yet also, by 1920, listed as a married dressmaker living in New York.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Names and Descriptions of Alien Passengers, SS *Philadelphia*, October 15<sup>th</sup> 1916. On this voyage Laura travelled with Lady Duff Gordon, in First Class, as Mrs Mabel Haering (Mabel was her middle name) and registered her nationality as Swiss and her occupation as 'secretary', reproduced at <[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)> [accessed 11/02/2018]. Names and Descriptions of Alien Passengers embarked at the port of Liverpool, SS *Franconia*, 27 September 1924. Mrs Mabel Haering seemingly travelled alone, in First Class, suggesting she was on business for Lady Duff Gordon, although her occupation is documented as 'married', reproduced at <[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)> [accessed 11/02/2018]. There are not many occurrences of Laura travelling with her husband, but they sailed together, as American citizens, from Genoa to New York, in September 1939. List of United States Citizens (For the Immigration Authorities), SS *Conte Di Savoia*, September 1939, reproduced at <[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)> [accessed 11/02/2018].

<sup>81</sup> Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 – Population, reproduced at <[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)> [accessed 11/02/2018].

Not only does this information reveal another strand of Laura's life, but also hints at skills that she may have used to make the apron that forms the starting point of this story, an item carefully mended and without a manufacturer's label.<sup>82</sup> The text that accompanies the image of the *Titanic* apron on the museum website includes the following information:

A year after the disaster, in 1913, Miss Francatelli married Swiss-born hotelier Max Alfred Haering. When her aunt and close friend asked if they could swap personal items as keepsakes to remember each other by, she gave her this apron.<sup>83</sup>

The above interpretation hints at Laura's departure from the UK, opening up her life story as a British migrant woman. A letter of provenance within the records held at Merseyside Maritime Museum outlines the circumstances in which the apron became a family keepsake related to a story of migration.<sup>84</sup> On her departure from the UK, Laura gave the apron to a maternal aunt, with whom she had a close relationship. Francatelli was not alone in selecting a memento to leave behind for a close female relative. Susannah Nicholls, on leaving England for Australia, promised her sister that "in sorting I shall try & send something for you to remember me by – even if of no value – you will like to have it".<sup>85</sup> For Laura Francatelli, this customary action was bound by an extraordinary event, as it was the association with the *Titanic* sinking that

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<sup>82</sup> Manufacture of the apron queried with Merseyside Maritime Museum, 11 January 2018. The curator of collections confirmed that apron is likely hand-made, with no labels, and with a number of small repairs.

<sup>83</sup> MMM.2003.221, Laura Francatelli's apron, reproduced at <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/visit/floor-plan/titanic/survivors-apron.aspx>> [accessed 11/05/2017].

<sup>84</sup> Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool), MMM.2003.221, Letter of provenance, Laura Francatelli's apron.

<sup>85</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Gay and Olive Rix, 25 December 1922.

informed the choice of gift.<sup>86</sup> This is an object with layers of meanings, all of which place Laura Francatelli at their centre.

Belk uses letters and diaries of nineteenth-century Mormon migrants to explore the practice of exchanging keepsakes with family left behind, a tradition continued into the twentieth century by Laura Francatelli and Susannah Nicholls.<sup>87</sup> While Belk exclusively focuses on this ritual being practised amongst female family members, the exchange of gifts was something in which men also took part. Susannah Nicholls, for example, talks of the fondness held between her uncle who accompanied the family to Australia, and her sister's husband, manifested in the gift of a pipe: "Uncle is this very minute smoking the pipe he gave him as a parting gift. His face always lights up the mention of your dear old Dad".<sup>88</sup> Those items that held special meaning were also marked out for inclusion in the family's travels, also crossing gender. A Christmas card to Susannah from her brother-in-law was singled out: "Just a line to say thank you...for the card by Gay which we value very much & which will go with us across the water." <sup>89</sup>

In addition to the physical presence of keepsakes and gifts, exchanged on departure, and sent between Australia and England, also referred to in her letters, Susannah's descriptive detail of her surroundings and possessions root her in her former familiar surroundings, as well as making a very tangible link back to her family in England, again mirroring nineteenth-century migrant letters and serving as a connection understood by sender and recipient.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> MMM.2003.221, Letter of provenance, Laura Francatelli's apron. Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool).

<sup>87</sup> Belk, 'Moving Possessions', pp. 339-361.

<sup>88</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to the Rix family, 1 August 1926.

<sup>89</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to Gay and Olive Rix, 25 December 1922.

<sup>90</sup> Belk, 'Moving Possessions', p.354.



**Figure 6.4** Laura Francatelli's apron.<sup>91</sup>

Those objects that belonged to Susannah and Laura respectively present many aspects of material culture, including the status of “inalienable wealth” of treasured family possessions discussed by Folkman Curasi, Price and Arnould, while also representing keepsakes very specific to the women’s departures from England.<sup>92</sup> They therefore become both irreplaceable as “cherished” possessions or keepsakes and serve as tangible symbolism of important personal events, in this case, migration and separation.<sup>93</sup> When the dynamic of migration activity is introduced, material culture takes on even further significance. Implicit in the role of kin keeper, as explored by Folkman Curasi et al, is the “safe transmission” of keepsakes.<sup>94</sup> In the cases of

<sup>91</sup> MMM.2003.221, Laura Francatelli's apron,

Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool).

<sup>92</sup> Folkman Curasi, Price, and Arnould, 'Cherished Possessions'.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p.610.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.611.

Susannah Nicholls and Laura Francatelli, this has included the transfer of ownership, by family members, to museum collections for long-term safeguarding. While this falls outside of Folkman Curasi's model of kin keeping, it does form part of a museum's custodial function at a point when family possession and care might be either threatened or no longer viable. In terms of object biographies, these are examples of material culture that shift across temporal and spatial boundaries. Susannah's items are particularly poignant, taking on a role as keepsake after her death in 1929.<sup>95</sup>

When Susannah Nicholls moved to Australia, she harboured hopes of returning home to visit her family after five years, an unfulfilled ambition.<sup>96</sup> Laura Francatelli was a seasoned transatlantic traveller who returned to England for her final years, a naturalised American by the time of her death in 1967.<sup>97</sup> These British women, very close in age, both from London, experienced very different lives as migrants. Their possessions, now part of museum collections, unlock the complexities of their respective narratives and serve to demonstrate the diversity of women's migration history. In turn, their stories reinforce the potential plurality of objects, and showcase a multitude of meanings that can be attached to them. This approach creates a platform on which to discuss the assortment of skills deployed by British migrant women and situate them beyond marriage and motherhood, and above the construct of surplus discussed through my study. By selecting objects relating to just two individuals, I have introduced Susannah Nicholls as sister, wife, mother, homemaker, teacher, agriculturist and correspondent, and Laura Francatelli as

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<sup>95</sup> Stevenson, 'Susannah Nicholls', reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2985>> [accessed 07/02/2018].

<sup>96</sup> Susannah's letters refer to this desired trip home on a number of occasions.

<sup>97</sup> Report of the Death of an American Citizen, Laura Mabel Haering, June 2 1967, reproduced at <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)> [accessed 11/02/2018].



secretary, dressmaker, traveller and wife. Both Susannah Nicholls and Laura Francatelli pursued careers in England as single women, and when married, absorbed their professions into complex yet well-managed lives.

### **Creating narratives through new object meanings**

This section signposts the possibilities of using museum collections to interrogate the varied perspectives of women's lives as migrants and settlers, and to assign to them additional meanings and, therefore, value. Using the themes of migrant women's working lives discussed in previous chapters, I repeated the methodology of searching across the websites of themed museums in countries relevant to the study. I selected objects that potentially support the diverse histories of British migrant women. These collections are seemingly unrelated to either British women, or migration. However, they potentially play a role in supporting this history by introducing additional contextual meanings.<sup>98</sup>

In Chapter 4 I discussed the involvement of British migrant women in agriculture, from the middle-class domain of orchard farming in the Okanagan Valley in Canada, to single women who sought career opportunities in market gardening in Australia, as documented by the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women (SOSBW). Many of the migration opportunities for families, such as that of Susannah Nicholls, revolved around the offer of land settlement. The "10 ½ acres at Pearcedale" to where the Nicholls family moved included "7 acres of orchard....apples, pears, plums, apricots etc. and 2 ½ acres market garden...".<sup>99</sup> From the sources explored in Chapter 4, I concluded that migrant women, across class and marital status, actively

<sup>98</sup> The importance of challenging traditional approaches to cataloguing and reaching a status in which women's histories are better acknowledged is discussed in H. Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective' in Levin, *Gender*, pp.53-64.

<sup>99</sup> SLV Nicholls, MS 12127, Letter from Susannah Nicholls to the Rix Family, 7.10.23.

contributed to the work of farm settlements, although this was little acknowledged. In New Zealand, a country that actively pursued immigration due to population decline, dairy farming was an area in which the female workforce almost doubled during the early twentieth century, from 70,300 in 1901 to 139,400 in 1936.<sup>100</sup> These figures are unlikely to have included married women, as part-time working was generally disregarded, and unpaid work unacknowledged, despite a report that established the undocumented contribution of women working on dairy farms as being 32 hours per week.<sup>101</sup>

A similar scenario was found in the interwar dairying industry in Canada, and the collection held at the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum reflects its history. The focus of the collection rests largely on the technology used in the industrial process of dairying, yet allows an alternative way into understanding the work of many migrant women who travelled from the UK to settle on farms overseas. Training for prospective migrant women in the UK included dairying work in anticipation of their future roles in the industry. Yet this history, where female migration, farming, land settlement and technology intersected, has little documented material evidence.

However, if the objects held within the collections of the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum are considered through this perspective, it is possible to tease out alternative narratives and add further meaning to them as material culture. The illustration below shows one of twenty-five mechanical cream separators documented through the museum's web-based collections portal, most of which date from the interwar period.

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<sup>100</sup> W.M. Hamilton, *The Dairy Industry in New Zealand* (New Zealand: Department of Scientific and Industrial Research), 1944, pp.100–01.

<sup>101</sup> Hamilton, *The Dairy Industry*, p.107.



**Figure 6.5** Cream Separator, 1978.0805.001, Junior/1 by De Laval Co. Ltd, Canada, circa 1938.<sup>102</sup>

The cataloguing information that accompanies the object, extracted from the museum's website, not only positions it within a history of women's farm-based labour, but also references their relationships with emerging technology :

Mechanical separation allowed dairy farmers to increase their yield of butterfat – and income. Hand-cranked mechanical separators began appearing on Canadian farms in the 1890s and were commonly used by farm women and children as part of their labour routine...<sup>103</sup>

The museum might usefully interpret this object to reveal the connections between the different areas of farm work with which migrant women engaged, as well as their intersecting relationships. A single object presents a visual

<sup>102</sup> 1978.0805.001, Cream separator, reproduced at <<https://ingeniumcanada.org/ingenium/collection-research/collection.php?fq=Agriculture%2CDairying&sort=&limit=100&q=cream%20separator>> [accessed 12/01/2018]. © Ingenium. Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation.

<sup>103</sup> 1978.0805.001, Cream separator, reproduced at <<https://ingeniumcanada.org/ingenium/collection-research/collection-item.php?id=1978.0805.001>> [accessed 12/01/2018].

insight into a physical process of dairy farming with which women and girls engaged. In the previous chapter I discussed the economic value of family units in smallholdings. The above mention of children, who were often girls working alongside their mothers, helps highlight this theme. While the object's most obvious association is with the gendered dynamic of farming families, additional context to the existing data would also reveal the interdependency between migrant women as farmer and domestic help respectively.

For many young, unmarried women who undertook agricultural training in Britain, their route to farm work lay in their roles as domestic servants rather than as agricultural workers.<sup>104</sup> Much of the discussion in Chapter 6 gives attention to the thousands of young women targeted through schemes under the Empire Settlement Act to meet the demand for domestic servants in the British dominions. In rural areas of Canada, New Zealand and Australia, there was little difference between the unpaid household and farm work of married women and those who were employed as domestic helps. The latter were as likely to be engaged in farm work as domestic activity, made explicit through advance information of the SOSBW, which advised that "In country districts the demand for domestic help in farm houses is very large...and a knowledge of butter-making, bread-making and milking is most useful."<sup>105</sup>

Through one single object, therefore, the lives of many British migrant women can be told, hinting at the potential of exploiting digital sources to reassess the value of such materials, and increase their impact as museum collections. This collection of farming technology can be repositioned to

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<sup>104</sup> SOSBW, GB 106, 1sos. As made clear in the Overseas Settlement Department, *Handbook for Women Who Are Thinking Of Settling Overseas* (HMSO: London, 1923).

<sup>105</sup> SOSBW, GB 106, 1sos, Overseas Settlement Department, *Handbook for Women*, p.11.

intersect with a strand of migrant women's history that encompasses the diversity of their working lives.

A further brief example of how the history of migrant women might also be told is through the area of domestic technological history. The range of washing machines found in collections of the Museums Victoria includes a number that date from the 1920s.<sup>106</sup> The domestic technology and simplicity of household work in Australia compared favourably with that of the UK, and was used as an enticement for young British women to relocate overseas and pursue this occupation.<sup>107</sup> While in rural areas the work as a domestic was varied, in cities the work was similar to that in the UK, except that "the work is carried out under easier conditions, for the houses are modern and fitted with electric light, gas, waters, baths, and all the latest labour-saving devices."<sup>108</sup> This additional example further illustrates how museum objects can be questioned, reclassified and reinterpreted to support those histories that have potential to be better represented.

### **Rethinking the material culture of migrant women**

In conclusion, the above evaluation contributes to thinking about migrant women and material culture, and specifically in this case, museum objects. Items chosen by individuals for preservation in museums, such as those that belonged to Susannah Nicholls and Laura Francatelli, are implicitly significant. By studying them, as material that provides insight into women's lives, we can use museology as a strategy to place women's stories at a public forefront of migration historiography. The retention of the personal objects

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<sup>106</sup> Collection of washing machines, reproduced at <<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2875>> [accessed 12/01/2018].

<sup>107</sup> A feature of her home which Susannah Nicholls also discusses on a number of occasions in her letters.

<sup>108</sup> SOSBW, GB 106 1sos, Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women, *Australia. The Land of Hope and Sunshine. How Women Can Get There and What They Say Of It*. 1927.

discussed indicates a continued value placed on them by family members. Their current existence as museum collections allows a representation of their lives, supported by their own written word and that of their families, to be told. I also demonstrate how material culture supports the history of migrant women through the reassessment of object meanings, allowing gaps to be filled in this specific history.

The route to these collections was through the digital resources deployed by many museums. Museums have a role to play in using existing material culture to present the diverse range of narratives contained within them, using both physical and virtual spaces available to them. The examples I have used above illustrate challenges and opportunities in realising this. I have discussed how narratives of women's migration history can be extracted and presented through digital platforms.

My methodological approach was to interrogate collections accessible through digital platforms, primarily museum websites. Using digital data usefully exposes the limitations of traditional cataloguing systems while also offering solutions for creating public, global platforms for history held within museums. It is therefore worth referencing relevant recent thinking on the subject. Two pertinent examples are projects that used digital approaches to profile migration and women's history respectively. The first project involved the "virtualization" of an exhibition, "The Golden Bridge", at the Heatherbank Museum of Social Work.<sup>109</sup> This used collections held beyond the domain of museums, and largely inaccessible, such as those from the Quarriers Homes

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<sup>109</sup> The Heatherbank Museum of Social Work now exists as an archive at Glasgow Caledonian University, reproduced at < <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/archives/> > [accessed 20/12/2018].

in Scotland, to tell the story of child migration from Scotland to Canada.<sup>110</sup> Through the digitisation of the collections and the creation of a global platform through which people could access and interact with them, the profile of child migration history and related collections was vastly increased, while also allowing for a “rich media approach” to interpretation.<sup>111</sup>

Another museum project to exploit the flexibility of digital technologies to bring a narrative of women to the forefront was the virtual exhibition “Progress and Permanence: Women and the New Brunswick Museum 1880-1980”.<sup>112</sup> Drawing from her work about the women who shaped New Brunswick Museum during the nineteenth century, Lianne McTavish and her colleagues chose a digital platform to create a virtual exhibition to present this story and its significance to the evolution of the museum. Digital curatorship also has the potential to create a link between past and present, situating histories in a trajectory of understanding that can inform contemporary lives. For example, Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the lives of women in agriculture and demonstrate how British migrant women entered into a world both well-established yet obscured in terms of official recognition, the richest acknowledgments being through literature of the time. My study is rooted in a specific timeframe. However an online project, *The Invisible Farmer*, at Museums Victoria highlights how a digital approach can encompass and present a much broader context.<sup>113</sup> The project reveals the contribution that women have made to agriculture in Australia, from the knowledge of indigenous populations, to the

<sup>110</sup> For a discussion about the project see E. Daly and N. Ballantyne, ‘Retelling the Past Using New Technologies: A Case Study into the Digitization of Social Work Heritage Material and the Creation of a Virtual Exhibition’ in *Journal of Technology in Human Services* 27 (2009), pp.44-56. The museum ceased to be a physical presence in 2004, but the collection is held for research purposes at Glasgow Caledonian University as the Heatherbank Social Work Collection, reproduced at <<http://www.culture24.org.uk/sc000123>> [accessed 21/02/2018].

<sup>111</sup> Daly and Ballantyne, ‘Retelling the Past’, p.56.

<sup>112</sup> B. Huskins, ‘Reviewed work: Progress and Permanence. Women and the New Brunswick Museum 1880-1980 by Shawna Quinn, Lianne McTavish and Greg Quinn’ in *The Public Historian*, 31:1 (2009), pp.129-136.

<sup>113</sup> ‘The Invisible Farmer’, reproduced at <<https://museums victoria.com.au/article/invisible-farmer/>> [accessed 19/12/2018].

current picture that sees women produce 49% of real farm income. Themes of this project also resonate with my study in recognising the complexity of farming women's lives and place in modern terminology what migrant women pursued historically:

Today's female farmers are scientists and mothers,  
businesswomen and activists, as likely to be managing  
the sheep run as feeding the shearers.<sup>114</sup>

This digital medium raises possibilities, both of profiling these histories, but also locating a range of materials within it. For example, the potential to also connect historic object collections and their respective stories to those featured in The Invisible Farmer project might enrich the content even more, allowing for distinct histories to be incorporated, such as migrant women, whether from Britain or elsewhere. These examples demonstrate the value of digital technologies, both in accessing material, but also by using a virtual platform to connect collections and stories, otherwise disparate and inaccessible, and by creating a public presence, particularly valuable for those histories traditionally left at the outskirts of museum collecting and interpretation. Museums offer a powerful vehicle to mitigate this, if they introduce the necessary interventions around their collections which can be partly achieved, as Cameron suggests, through an approach to cataloguing that includes a review process and treats the object record as a potentially evolving story rather than as a set series of facts.<sup>115</sup>

Additionally, paying attention to the gendered characteristics of collections alongside more considered thought to object descriptions can allow

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> F. Cameron, 'Museum Collections', Documentation and Shifting Knowledge 'Paradigms' in Parry, *Digital Age*, p.87.



artefacts to work in different ways, opening up narratives of the women with whom they are associated. This is important if extant material culture is to support the representation of migrant women's histories and lead to an enriched understanding and more accurate representation of their lives.

## Conclusion

The “small army of single unemployed girls roaming the city in search of employment” about whom the Melbourne *Herald* newspaper reported in 1930 had become victims of the worldwide economic depression that triggered a shift in the pattern of migration that had been seen during the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Marking the end date of this study, my focus on the years from 1914 until 1929 offers new perspectives on the study of British women’s migration.

The story of British migration forms part of a vast, global narrative. British women became part of the landscape of empire, yet their experience in India and South America, for example, contrasted with that of those settling in Australia, Canada or New Zealand. I have focused on the latter, part of what were termed the “white dominions”. Whether a government official’s wife, missionary or teacher, a domestic servant or farmstead holder’s wife, all played a part in the imperial project.

This study locates white British migrant women as central to the empire settlement project of the 1920s, which had emerged during the years of the First World War as a continuum of the promotion of female migration established during the previous century. These women differed from their Victorian and Edwardian counterparts through their existence in a world that, on the one hand sought stability and comfort through a revised imperial ideal, while on the other, was modernising in terms of women’s position within it. While many patterns of migration of the prewar era can be recognised, new ones were also set. While these women shared the common experience of

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<sup>1</sup> Higman, *Domestic Service*, p.95.

migration, their backgrounds and ways in which they engaged with new environments varied greatly. Ultimately these women used migration to carve out their own opportunities, under new terms of engagement, whether within the established imperial framework, or beyond it.

The context of movement across empire during the interwar period was, of course, not confined to the British migrants exclusively populating the “white dominions”. British women were part of a much larger global movement of people, including two-way traffic from the dominions to Britain.<sup>2</sup> The migration of women from Britain to Canada, Australia and New Zealand was just one component of the ebb and flow of groups and individuals traversing countries and continents that formed vast British-controlled areas, whether as dominion, colony, protectorate, mandate or overseas territory. The basic principle that, as a British subject, free movement was available to all, led during the nineteenth century to a diverse and dynamic profile of empire, nearly three million British subjects living overseas, but within the empire.

However, my study is framed within Britain’s global imperial project that became increasingly defined by race and white dominance. The women were white and British and, while within this profile gender and class contributed to their experiences, they shared an ideological framework that permitted them access to empire. Within this context I have, in the above chapters, introduced new thinking around female migration, and enhanced discussions around themes present in current literature. I have argued that the First World War is of particular interest to understanding an aspect of women’s migration history, and how this related to the gendered domestic environment of the conflict.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see A. Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Placing occupation alongside marital status, I have argued that migrant women's lives were both liberating and constraining, but constantly defined by the experience of resettlement.

My thesis is underpinned with arguments about the constructs of surplus women and motherhood, both used as tools in female migration policy and empire settlement. I have discussed how the term surplus became gendered as population data became more sophisticated throughout the nineteenth century, allowing it to become a tool for emigration promoters, as a rationale for targeting unmarried women. The intersecting notion of motherhood, I have demonstrated, served both to compound the status of unmarried women as marginalised and create a powerful component of white imperialism.

By introducing the First World War as a context, a much overlooked period in migration historiography, I have demonstrated that overseas settlement during these years became regendered, women dominating the cohort of outgoing people from Britain. This flags up the need to view women's history during wartime through alternative perspectives, beyond that of the well-travelled historiographies centred around the home front. I have discussed how the pattern of female migration during the conflict correlates with the high unemployment that women faced, a discussion that also contributes to a richer understanding of women's lives within domestic wartime Britain.

The notions of surplus and motherhood I have applied to inform new insights into the relationship between migration, marital status and occupation amongst women, placing the critical theme of personal agency centrally. I argue that migrant women responded to their new environments in such a way

that positioned them well beyond the constructs imposed upon them, and yet, their attempts to disrupt this were not always successful. This analysis is contextualised within the ascendancy of nationalism and imperialism of the 1920s, and I probe to what extent migrant women engaged with this broader framework. I argue that this presented in a range of ways, implicit and explicit. At a more personal level, I explore the theme of self-determination amongst migrant women and argue that this also varied, depending on marital status, and show that both married and unmarried women operated across a spectrum of individual agency. This might have depended on class or marital status, but I have shown, through the example of Louisa Kiddell, that class and financial independence did not necessarily equate to decision of choice, and that, in this case, ended with tragic consequences. I have approached single and married women separately, yet there is much value for future study to introduce a comparison between these cohorts, a dynamic I hint at when evaluating the relationship between married settlers and migrant domestics whom they employed.

Themes of politics, women's rights and internationalism are present in the story of female migration, as displayed through the work of the migrant women of New Zealand and Australia who embedded themselves within an existing culture of feminism to create or continue careers. However, alongside these women were those who found settlement to be gruelling work, compounded by the impact of war on husbands, physically debilitated through injury. The latter is just one theme that I introduce, and yet is worthy of further consideration. I have signposted others for which there is currently limited study. For example, juvenile migration, in terms of managed schemes, is well

covered in existing literature, and yet there is little that gives attention to the experience of migrant children within families. I have used, in Chapter 5, the journal of child migrant John Clark, written as a memoir. Susannah Nicholls discusses her children, and those of her sister, to a great extent in her letters and gives insight also into their experiences. I have touched on themes of migration and interracial marriage, of divorced women, and of unmarried mothers. These tangential themes I have not elaborated on for the purpose of this study, and yet all offer valid and under-discussed themes around the idea of “marginalised migrants”. Chapter 6 offers an epilogue to my study, exploring the possibilities of curating women’s migration history using the material culture of museum collections through digital platforms. I argue that this is an under-represented area of public history and that, by challenging existing interpretations of museum artefacts and harvesting the themes of this study, new narratives of migrant women can be created and made accessible.

By situating British migrant women beyond the constructs imposed upon them, I have offered an alternative entry point into migration historiography, and yet there is far more work to be pursued. I have signalled just some themes above that would be worthy of further consideration, but also needing consideration are the conceptual frameworks within which these studies might be positioned. I have also hinted at some of these, and include transnationalism and imperial globalisation. There is also value in considering these migrant women in a broader context of empire, and, indeed a wider global structure, beyond the walls of the “white dominions” and across an intercultural framework. These I offer as concluding thoughts to a study that opens up questions about women’s migration history during the period 1914-

1929 and situates the women whom I have introduced through the above discussions 'beyond surplus' and 'beyond motherhood'.

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